

Prabuddha Bharata

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत



ग्राम्य वराहकृष्ण
Katha Upa. II. iii. 12.

Arise! Awake! And stop not until the Goal is reached.

—SWAMI VIVEKANANDA.

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NOTES OF CONVERSATIONS WITH THE HOLY MOTHER

[These notes, taken from the diaries of disciples as published in the Bengali monthly, *Udbodhan*, derive their special value from the simplicity and directness with which many aspects of practical religion are herein touched upon and illuminated. To those of us who had the unique privilege of knowing her, these words have an extreme spiritual value and significance, as those of one who was regarded as the first and the greatest disciple of Sri Ramakrishna and possessed of immeasurable spiritual power and wisdom, may well claim to have. The first instalment of the notes was published in last December.]

The Holy Mother said: "The Master would often advise me to take short walks for the sake of health. In those days I used to live in the *nahavat**. I would bathe at four in the early morning and enter my room for the day. One day he said to me, 'A Bhairavi† will come to-day. Dye a cloth for her. I shall have to give it to her.' And she came after the midday worship at the Kali temple, and the Master conversed with her for a long time. She was a little hot-brained. She

* A small room in the Dakshineswar Kali temple, situated a little apart from the inner enclosure and meant for the temple music.

† A nun and votary of Mother Kali.

would look after me, but sometimes threaten me that if I did not keep cold rice for her she would kill me with her trident. That would frighten me. But the Master said, 'Do not fear. She is a right kind of Bhairavi,—that is why she is a little hot-brained.' She would sometimes beg enough foodstuffs for a whole week. During his Sadhana days the Master would often see tempting visions. These would frighten him, but he would reject them. One day he had a vision in the Panchavati, in which he saw a boy coming to him. He was plunged in anxious thought. Then the Mother revealed to him that the boy was a cowherd of Vraja, one of the divine companions of Sri Krishna, and would come to him as his spiritual son. When Rakhal (Swami Brahmananda) came, he said, 'This is the same *Rakhal* (cowherd) come to me. What is your name?' The boy said, 'Rakhal.' 'Then it is quite right,' said the Master.

"Hajra said to the Master, 'Why do you think so much of Narendra and Rakhal? Why do you not dwell constantly in God?' 'See how I dwell in Him!' said the Master and at once plunged into Samadhi. His beard and hair on the head and the body stood on end, and he remained thus for an hour. Ramlal recited the names of God in his ears and gradually brought him down to the normal state. The Master then said to Ramlal, 'Did you see what is meant by dwelling in God? That is why I keep down my mind by thinking of and loving Narendra and others.' Ramlal said, 'It is best you live in your own way.' "

I asked Mother if I should continue the practice of Pranayama which I had begun.

The Holy Mother replied: "Yes, you may practise a little, but not much, for it may heat the brain. But if the mind becomes calm of itself, what is the use of Pranayama?"

I said: "But, Mother, nothing is accomplished till the *Kundalini** is awakened."

"Surely the *Kundalini* will wake up. Go on repeating His name, everything will come out all right. You may repeat His name a million times even though the mind is unsteady. You

* *Kundalini* = 'coiled-up.' The sleeping spiritual energy is so called and represented as a serpent.

will hear the *anáhata dhvani*† before the Kundalini awakes. But everything depends on the grace of the Divine Mother. The other day during the small hours of the morning, I had a vision of a *Sivalingam*—of Viswanatha.”‡

“But, Mother, these stone symbols of Siva no longer satisfy us.”

“Nay, my son, these are true. Many great sinners who visit Benares are redeemed of their sins by touching the symbol of Viswanatha. He is graciously accepting every body’s sin. On Saturdays and Sundays all sorts of people come and salute me, touching my feet. This makes my feet burn.”

There was a devotee who used to visit the Monastery and the Holy Mother very regularly. But he suddenly stopped visiting. The change seemed mysterious. I asked Mother the reason of it. She said: “It is due to his past *Karma*. It has overwhelmed him at last.” “But,” said I, “if everything is according to the will of God, why then does He not destroy his *Karma*?”

“Yes,” she rejoined, “He may destroy it, if He wills. Just see how even the Master had to suffer the consequence of his action. His elder brother (Ramkumar) suffering from a high malignant fever was drinking water. But fearing that water would aggravate the illness, the Master snatched the glass away from his hand. This displeased his brother highly. He said, ‘Just as you have refused me water now, so shall you be unable to eat anything in your last days.’ The Master said, ‘I did it for your good. Why did you curse me?’ His brother began to cry and replied, ‘I do not know why this curse came out of my lips.’ This was however fulfilled. The Master had to suffer for his *Karma*. During his last illness, he could scarcely eat anything.”

On another occasion I enquired if I should count when I did my *japa** The Holy Mother said: “No, do it without counting, for counting often diverts the attention from the *japa*.” I asked: “How is it that *japa* does not lead me deep into God-absorption?”

† The supernatural sound *Om*, perceivable in the superconscious state.

‡ The Holy Mother was then staying at Benares.

* Repetition of God’s name.

She replied : "It will by and by. But do not give up *japa* even if the mind is unwilling and unsteady. You must go on with the repetition. And you will find that the mind is getting gradually steadier—like a flame in calm air. Any movement in the air disturbs the steady burning of the flame ; even so the presence of any thought or desire makes the mind unsteady. The *mantram* must be correctly repeated. An incorrect utterance delays progress. A woman had for a part of her *mantram* the word *Rukmini-nâthâya*. But she would repeat it as *Ruku*. This impeded her progress. But she got the correct *mantram* afterwards through His grace."

"THE SUDRA HABIT"

BY THE EDITOR

Nearly two years ago Rabindranath Tagore contributed an article on "Sudra-dharma" to the Bengali monthly, *Prabasi*, edited by Ramananda Chatterjee, also the editor of the *Modern Review*. The *Modern Review* for March last has published a translation of it under the title "The Sudra Habit," and given it the place of honour. The occasion of this publication is obviously that towards the end of his essay, Tagore makes some prophetic remarks about the employment of Indian soldiers by the British in their fight against the Chinese and considers that such an ignominious employment of Indians has been possible because of the Sudra habit *i.e.* the spirit of dispassionate (mechanical ?) obedience and service that the *Varnâshrama dharma*, usually translated as caste system, has inculcated upon us from immemorial past. He believes that the idea underlying the famous verse of the Gita—*Better death in one's own dharma, for the dharma of another is even more to be dreaded*—has been the cause of the gradual ruin of our people. Rabindranath has devoted the greater part of his essay to the consideration of the merits and demerits of the caste system and the above is his conclusion.

The caste system indeed requires detailed and deep criticism. For it is one of the fundamentals of Hindu collective life ; it pertains not merely to religion or society but also to our econo-

mic life. In fact it is the frame work of our individual and collective life in all its aspects. The caste system, in spite of its present disrupted and degraded condition, is by no means dead. And it is urgently necessary to know its value and utility in the reconstruction of the nation's future. This is one of the reasons why we are returning again and again to this theme. And we hope our readers will not grudge us their company in an examination of Rabindranath's statement of the caste system and his verdict upon it.

The article is characterised by the usual insight and imagination of the great poet. He begins with a comparison of the caste system with the social economy of the West. He observes: "Even where no artificial barriers are set up in the way of the individual choosing the means of his livelihood, fate in most cases does not leave him free. The man who is entitled to dream of becoming Prime Minister may, as a matter of fact, be forced to sweep the streets for a living. In such case he cannot but be in a state of inward rebellion. . . . In countries where the earning of livelihood has nothing to do with religion the fact nevertheless remains that society cannot get on without the performance of the work of the lower orders, and therefore the greater portion of the people have still to go on doing such work. . . . India of old had solved the problem thus arising, by making occupation hereditary. In compulsion by the State lies the insult of servitude that leads to brooding rebelliousness. Here the compulsion was of *dharma*,—to follow the occupation of one's caste was enjoined as a religious duty. *Dharma* asks of man renunciation,—a renunciation, however, which is not a deprivation, but is glorious."

But this excellence of the *Varnashrama dharma* has been marred, according to Rabindranath, by at least two basic faults. He believes *firstly* that the hereditary principle of occupation has made us inefficient inasmuch as an avocation, especially one that requires intelligent initiative, cannot be made hereditary without being degraded into mere mechanical forms; and *secondly* that the hereditary principle is maintained by looking upon the caste rules and conventions as sacred and inviolable, and this undue reverence for caste rules has made the people so many unintelligent, unthinking, obedient tools, impervious to all wrongs and insults. Let us see if the poet has any valid reasons for thinking so. We may say at once that we do not agree with

him in his reading of the problem. We admit that the caste system has now become mechanical and is full of defects, but we differ when he thinks that it is the caste system that has emasculated the country. We hold that it is some other cause that has degraded the nation and with it all its institutions including the caste system.

As regards the first defect, Rabindranath says: "Certain types of work are not a mere matter of external habit, but depend for their proper performance on intelligent initiative. But confining them to a particular caste the outward paraphernalia may be retained, but the inner living quality of the work is inevitably lost. To make improvements, even in the products of manual labour, the application of mind is necessary. When that is destroyed by hereditary pursuit of the caste avocation, man is reduced to a machine, and can but keep on repeating himself."

Thus Rabindranath imagines a necessary antagonism between hereditary profession following traditions and intelligent individual initiative. He does not explain it, he simply assumes it. We however do not see any reason why there should be this antagonism. It may be that if the same *individual* were to follow the same profession for several centuries continuously, without dying, he would become mechanical and dead to the spirit of his profession. But as a matter of fact every generation is bringing fresh batches of individuals to the performance of the caste duties, and they are quite free to improve upon their predecessors, as indeed they have done if history is to be believed. Tagore seems to assume that the phenomenon of the outward paraphernalia being retained and the inner living quality of the work being lost is peculiar to the caste system. But is it not inevitable in all human activities, whether hereditary or of individual initiative? Let us take the cases of Mullas and Padres. Have not their professions become as formal and mechanical as that of the Hindu priests? Yet they are not caste-bound.

Apart from the supposed mechanisation of the operatives, there are other aspects of the hereditary principle of profession, which we may consider here, though Rabindranath does not mention them clearly. It may be said that (a) without competition—and the caste system tends to eliminate competition—

progress is impossible, and (b) that the hereditary principle prevents new genius from coming from outside into the castes. As regards the first point, it is only partly true. If competition stimulates progress, the hereditary principle also does the same. Generation after generation the fathers have been carefully handing down their knowledge and experience to the sons, and even a slight improvement in each generation means much in the long run. Experience also does not show that the hereditary principle has been less effective than competition. It will be granted that in arts and crafts the achievements of the Hindus have been as signal, if not more, as those of any other people. Their past achievements compare very favourably with even our much-vaunted modern products. And we know arts and crafts have been hereditary among the Hindus. If it is argued that the hereditary principle, though successful at one stage, brings about later on rapid atrophy and degradation through the mechanisation of professions, our reply is that if a trade can flourish for centuries in full vigour, then its subsequent ruin must be traced to some other cause than the hereditary principle.—Surely a test lasting through centuries is sufficiently proved and reassuring.

The second point also is only partly true. The caste system may suppress a few cases of genius. But that is not an unmixed evil. Geniuses are not wholly beneficial to mankind. Though they improve arts and crafts, they also throw a vast majority of craftsmen in the shade and create great economic confusion. The caste system prevents these sudden disturbances from outside, though of course it does not suppress the birth of geniuses within the caste folds themselves. But in the latter case the advantage is that geniuses cannot selfishly keep aloof but must share their special knowledge with their kinsmen. One point in this connection should not be lost sight of. It is that ninety-nine per cent of people are of average taste and intelligence, without any special leaning or aptitude, and that choice of profession with them is only a matter of early suggestion and training. These ninety-nine per cent can easily and more conveniently take to their parental callings without violence to their inner being. The one per cent of geniuses may always have their way. We hear of them even in ancient days. We read of Brahmin warriors, Kshatriya sages, Sudra and Vaishya Rishis, hunter Kshatriyas, etc. Every system, social or econo-

mical, is designed for the majority ; no human institution can be true of *all*. The respective merits of the competitive and the hereditary principle as applied to avocations, are that competition is slightly more beneficial to the arts and crafts but the hereditary principle is more beneficial to the artisans and craftsmen themselves. The question that has to be answered in this connection is whether we should look more to the benefit of the crafts or of the craftsmen. India's answer was and is that the welfare of men should be considered to be much superior to mere industrial efficiency.

Tagore's second charge against the caste system is graver still. Hereditary profession mechanises ; but the underlying policy that makes professions hereditary degenerates the spirit and causes not merely industrial inefficiency, but also an all-round degradation of the intellectual and spiritual life. For it makes us look more and more to the form than to the spirit. And thus we have become a nation of Sudras—abjectly docile servants. The poet says : “The mental and moral qualities of Brahmanhood demand personal power and effort,—it is only the external observances that belong to tradition. The words of our *shastra* still ring in our ears,—*Better death in one's own dharma, for the dharma of another is even more to be dreaded*. But this has come to mean that each caste must at all costs follow its traditional rules ; which, again, in practical effect is reduced to this, that the fixed observances must be kept up, without reference to their significance or utility.” We admit Hinduism looks upon forms and traditions as sanctified and their continuity as of the utmost importance. Rabindranath argues that such reverence for forms tends to draw the attention more and more away from the spirit. But he forgets that so long as we are vigorous and strong, mere forms cannot become unnaturally obtrusive, they remain as integral parts and expressions of our living motives and purposes. The separation of them comes about only after we cease to live, just as the shell of an animal separates after it dies. The bipartite division of form and spirit, though good analysis, is never real. So long as the spirit animates the form, they are a single whole. Our only peculiarity is that when the spirit departs, we do not allow the form to crumble down but retain it for further use. Rabindranath, in our opinion, has shown lack of comprehension

in his castigation of forms. He appears to have missed the significance of Hindu reverence for forms and why Hindus tenaciously hold on to even apparently dead forms. He evidently does not credit the Hindu idea that every form is capable, sometimes with slight modifications, of expressing various meanings from age to age.

He must admit that the forms which he now condemns were once the vehicle of living forces and significances. Supposing they are dead now, what would Rabindranath have us do? To discard them? Well, man cannot live without forms, he will have to borrow new ones. But when the nation is weak, will mere acceptance of new forms avail anything? New *spirit* must come. But if we study the growth of races and nations, we find that it is often out of the older fold, by availing of the seemingly dead forms, that the reforming prophets arise ;—such at least has been the experience of India. The forms, apparently dead, are not useless. They must be retained intact for the coming prophet to endow them with new purpose. Hinduism never professes that the significance of forms should remain permanent and static. On the other hand, it consciously changes the meaning of forms from age to age in accordance with the changing circumstances. It does not believe in iconoclasm, it believes in reinterpretation. Besides when the spirit is drooping or dead, it is the forms that hold a people from going down to complete ruin. Continuity of history and tradition is a potent safeguard against annihilation. Even in their dead condition forms are not an unmixed evil and in their living condition, they are not mere forms.

But though we deny that respect for forms necessarily deadens the spirit, yet we must admit that restriction in whatever form cannot but cramp the spirit to a certain extent. But the poet's estimation of the caste system as only restriction and no freedom is unjustifiable. In fact this apparent restriction only indicates a larger freedom which the caste system ensures to every one and therefore it is absolutely wrong to trace our present fall to the caste regulations. But before we turn to this point, we must refer to a point in Tagore's article which requires clarification. He says: "Be that as it may, the *dharma* of the Sudra is the only one that is as a matter of fact extant to-day in this land of India. Where else, indeed, in all the world can be found the like of those whose

very *dharma* has reduced them to hereditary slaves? Neither hurt nor insult can make them shrink from clinging fast to this *dharma* of theirs. Never have they known what it is to demand or receive respect; through the ages have they deemed themselves fulfilled by sheer persistence in the duty of their Sudra estate, in all its purity." From this passage as well as what Rabindranath says later on of the Sudra *dharma*, it is not clear whether he refers to the technical Sudras. If he does, then he is wrong to assume that "the Sudra obsessed with the observance of his own *dharma*, forms the vast majority of India." In fact we have at least as many Vaishyas, including the agriculturists who follow a Vaishya profession, as Sudras among the Hindus. Tagore does not specify anywhere what he means by Sudra *dharma*. We have to infer that by that he means slavish obedience—for Sudra's original duty was conceived as service of the upper three castes. But if we take his words to refer to the technical Sudras, we do not see how the whole caste system and the hereditary principle can come in for castigation. For then the poet would be supposed to imply that the duties of the other three castes do not tend to make them slavish and mechanical. But evidently that is not the meaning of the poet. He quotes again and again that verse of the Gita, —*Better death in one's own dharma, etc.*—in connection with his trenchant caricature of the Sudra habit. He remarks: "So, as I was saying, in this work of the Sudra there is neither self-interest, nor any higher interest, much less any glory,—all that there is in it is the shibboleth: *Better to die in one's own dharma.*" This verse, as is well known, does not concern the Sudra caste only, but states the attitude of all castes. We shall not therefore be wrong if we understand the poet to mean that the spirit indicated by this verse of the Gita, which underlies all castes, has produced in us an attitude of slavish following without question or protest, and made of all Hindus mechanical slaves of the powers that be. That is why he considers that the Sudra *dharma* alone is extant in India. "She will slay and be slain, with no question on her lips of why or wherefore, for that is forbidden by her *dharma*. Everywhere is she the bearer of menial burdens in a service that has neither meaning nor justification." But our charitable interpretation of the poet's words becomes difficult in view of the fact that the Sudra alone is forbidden by his *dharma* to question the order to serve, but

the duties of the other castes are not to serve orders, they having the full support of the *shastras* in refusing to submit to humiliating orders. Does Rabindranath then refer to the Sudra caste alone? Evidently that he does not do. The fact is that he is so carried away by his feelings that he has no patience to state his case in a way suitable to our common understanding. We shall not overrate this difficulty, but shall only mention that to trace the employment of Indian soldiers in the Chinese war to the evils of caste system seems to us rather a far cry, especially when we remember that Muhammedan soldiers who have not much respect for caste system could be employed during the last war against their own Caliph.

What we gather from all he has said about Sudra dharma is that the fundamental restrictive principle of the caste system has made us slavish, bound to forms, and dead to all spirit of freedom. We have stated before that this restriction would have made us all these if it had not an aspect of unlimited freedom. To judge a river by the limitation of its banks is to miss the free flow of its impetuous current. The caste system to be understood justly, must be judged in all its aspects. That Rabindranath does not do.

The caste system is not a mere economic system. But even an economic system cannot be judged from the mere economic view-point. In the scale of values, economic good stands low. The highest value is necessarily spiritual, at least so it has been thought in India from times immemorial. Our economic system must submit to this highest standard of judgment, and its operations must be so controlled that they may not obstruct spiritual progress and be a heavy drag on the individual and national energies. Social, political and intellectual activities must all be regulated in this way.

If the modern age has any lesson for us, it is that over-production and competition can easily make a hell of the world. These must be restrained and reduced to legitimate proportions. The best way to do so is to make occupation hereditary. We dealt with this point in our article on "Caste and Education" in November last. Peaceful pursuit of profession and an assurance of living without endangering the higher interests of life can be granted only by the caste system. It may to a certain

extent impair material progress, but that is more than compensated for by the spiritual gain.

The caste system has many aspects, economical, social, cultural, spiritual. We cannot dwell here on all of them. But what wonderful achievements lie to its credit both socially and culturally are known to all dispassionate students of Indian history. In its spiritual aspect it brings the highest spiritual freedom to the door of every one in whatever caste born ;—it teaches the doctrine of Karma Yoga which is the main object of the *Varnashrama dharma*. Socio-economic or cultural gains are secondary benefits. *In fact we shall fail to understand the true import of the caste system if we judge it by the standard of material or even intellectual efficiency.* Its final aim is purely spiritual. It assumes that the spiritual is the *only* good to be sought by man. All his other pursuits—for the average man must naturally be secular in the main—should be so conceived and moulded that they may eventually lead to spiritual self-realisation. This is Karma Yoga and this is the consideration that underlies that famous verse of the Gita,—*Better death in one's own dharma, etc.* It is easy to misunderstand this. If the main object of the caste system were material or intellectual good, such a dictum surely would have been disastrous. But when we remember that the Hindu law-givers aimed essentially at the spiritual growth of men, we at once find a deep and salutary purpose behind this rule. The poet's second charge against the caste system arises out of the failure to take the spiritual motive into account.

The spiritual good is realisable only through the purification of the heart,—the chastening of feelings, and not through intellectual powers. Desires must be eradicated. All our impulses should be turned towards the Divinity within. This requires that all our natural desires and activities should be conceived in the spirit of detachment and worship, by being related to God. And there must be the ever awake consciousness that all our thoughts and actions—our every moment—are for the realisation of the Divine. This is the spirit of Karma Yoga. It may be asked whether all Hindus are imbued with this spirit inasmuch as without it Karma Yoga will be meaningless. Our answer is that the efforts of our forefathers through millenniums have been to infiltrate the society with it, and we do believe that all the strata of society, more or less, are con-

scious of the spiritual goal of life. The ideal being made patent among all classes of the society, the next thing was to give a proper direction to their activities. Hence came the doctrine that it is not the *nature* of a work but the *way* in which it is done that finally counts in the spiritual life. We may do magnificent things, but if we do them in a selfish and passionate spirit, they are futile spiritually, for they do not purify the heart. But even a small thing done in the spirit of Karma Yoga, in a dispassionate, worshipful spirit, is highly beneficial, because it chastens the heart, and the purified heart reflects the glory of the Divine. Therefore there is no need of running mad after material efficiency, and all the ugly fighting that it requires, but let us do our own inherited work in the true spirit and we shall rapidly advance towards our goal.

This is the main direction of India's striving. And that is how it has been possible to discover spiritual giants even in the lower strata of society,—among weavers, cobblers, fishermen, cultivators, etc.—who laid no claim to efficiency or intellectualism. Their only preparation for sainthood was the purification of their heart.

To hold the doctrine of Karma Yoga—for that verse of the Gita implies that—as responsible for the downfall of India and to caricature it as slavish obedience, is, to say the least, preposterous. It does not mean mechanical following. *It means a conscious struggle from moment to moment to climb the spiritual height where alone the dispassionate performance of duties in the spirit of Karma Yoga is possible.* So long as the nation is strong, this struggle occupies the largest measure of its strength and attention. And then are born giants of spirituality and also giants in other provinces of life. For spirituality is the greatest strength. And when strength comes into the nation, it is manifested in all departments of life. Of course there are naturally periodical declines in strength. Then spirituality is at its ebb. Karma Yoga becomes mere formal observance and it seems that “under the oppressive burden of the Sudra habit groans the Hindu bowed in abjection.” But that is because spirituality is gone and not because there is any inherent defect in the caste system itself.

It is scarcely fair and correct to judge the merits and demerits of anything in its fallen state. The caste system to

be truly understood must be studied in its rise and in its fall. Rabindranath draws his conclusions from its fallen state alone. And no wonder his conclusions are wrong. The caste system imparts a kind of efficiency—spiritual efficiency. India has followed through ages this goal. Should we now change it for intellectual and material efficiency? Of course a harmony of both these will be the ideal social system for us. But is it possible? We, alas, do not see much chance of such a perfection being ever realised in this imperfect world. Anyhow it is an ideal worth striving after, and to its consideration the best minds of the nation should address themselves assiduously.

THE MESSAGE OF THE VEDAS

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We are accustomed to call any gathering of learned men by the name of *Sarasvati Sammelana*, because Sarasvati is ordinarily looked upon as the Goddess of Learning and the Presiding Deity of the Fine Arts. But, to my mind, Sarasvati connotes a greater idea than this, which we have unfortunately lost sight of. Sarasvati is the same as the Vedic Vác, the Word, the First Manifestation of Brahman whose Spirit, centred in Itself, brooded over the *Kàrana Samudra*, i.e., the void and limitless Causal Ocean, in the midst of Primeval Darkness (Rv. x. 129). Simultaneously with the thought of creation arising in Brahman's mind was manifested Vác, the Word, or *Om* as we call it, whose vibrations filled the limitless void, creating, as if in the twinkling of eye, Ether, Wind, Light, Water and the Universe. Suns and Moons, Stars and Planets, Devas and other divine beings were evolved and came into existence, dancing around, as it were, in sheer glee. *Rita* and Order too were evolved out of Chaos, and creation proceeded apace. All this creation was evolved, as it were, out of Vác, the Word, the First to have been manifested in the dark and limitless void of the *Kàrana Samudra*, and appropriately called Sarasvati, the One who has the *Saras* or the Causal Ocean for Her birth-place, and the First to have manifested Brahman. She is; as it were, the very Creative Principle of Brahman, identical with and inseparable from Him, so far as His manifestation is concerned, and the Revealer and Upholder of the Universe, in which Brahman has been infinitely manifested.

Vác is the Source or Mother of all Knowledge, divine and secular,

and thus has two aspects, *Para* and *Apara*. That Knowledge or *Vidyā*, which enables us to know or apprehend Brahman is *Para*, and that which turns away our mind from Him is *Aparā*. *Apara Vidyā*, if solely pursued, leads to our ultimate annihilation. It has, therefore, to be subordinated to *Parā Vidyā*, and its divergent current turned towards and blended with the current of the latter, so that the two united may reach Brahman in the long run.

As *Vāc* or *Sarasvatī* is co-extensive with, nay, greater than the Universe, our Knowledge also should be as wide as the Universe and cover every department of human thought and activity. But this Knowledge should be subordinated to *Parā Vidyā*, that which enables us to have a knowledge of, and a direct communion with Him who is the Source of this Universe and in whom all Knowledge merges. If we fail to make our Knowledge of Brahman the guiding principle of our life, we stand the danger of turning away from Him and straying out of the path, which ultimately may lead to our annihilation. Our Aryan ancestors fully grasped this central principle of knowledge, and founded a culture which was broad-based on the bed-rock of Truth, and has saved their descendants from total extinction.

Those who are engaged in the cultivation and pursuit of *Parā Vidyā* cannot, if they are true to themselves, look askance at *Aparā Vidyā*, and neglect it, and *vice versa*; for both are indissolubly linked with and supplement each other. Many will be surprised to learn that our great Rishis of old, while devoted to the cultivation of *Parā Vidyā* or *Brahma-Vidyā*, did not neglect the study and cultivation of *Aparā Vidyā* which comprises all the secular Sciences and Arts, such as Agriculture, Cattle-rearing, Trade, Commerce, Industries, Ship-building, Chariot-making, Political Science, Military Science, Sociology, Medical Science, Laws and even the arts of music, singing, dancing and verse-making, in fact, every Science and Art that make for human progress and enlightenment, with the ultimate object of the attainment of *Brahma-Vidyā*. Any scholar who carefully studies the Vedas cannot fail to be struck with this patent fact, which we in a later age seem to have lost sight of.

To my mind, there are certain important messages of the Vedas which we shall do well to ponder over and fully understand. The *First Great Message* is that Aryan culture is indigenous to the Punjab and is older than any culture that we know of, and that this ancient land was the cradle of the Aryan race, where our ancestors lived, and, through untold millenniums, laboured to build up a civilisation, liberal and comprehensive in character, and full of potentialities for the good of humanity as a whole. But Western scholars, to whom we owe so much, have fixed the age of Vedic culture at about 1500 or 2000 B. C. A very careful study of the *Rigveda*, however, will convince us that this estimate is not at all correct. There are internal evidences in this most ancient Scripture,

that go to show that there was a different distribution of land and water in northern India when the Vedic *mantras* were composed by, or revealed to the Risis. The Sarasvatī and the Satadru rivers used to flow in Rigvedic times directly into a sea which was situated to the south of the Punjab, where Rajputana now is (Rv. vii. 95, 2; iii. 33, 2). The former was a mighty river in those days, whose praises have been sung in many a hymn ; but she has now been reduced to a mere rivulet and is lost in the sands of the deserts of Rajputana. The Satadru also, instead of flowing directly into the sea, is now a tributary to the Indus. The natural inference would be that in post-Rigvedic times the bed of the sea into which these rivers directly flowed was upheaved through extensive seismic disturbances, and obstructed their courses. The Sarasvatī, finding her course obstructed, at first meandered along the newly thrown-up sand-banks of the upheaved bed of the Rajputana sea, and cut out a new course till she reached the Arabian sea. The Satadru also deflected her course towards the west, till she joined the Indus as her tributary. There is also evidence in the Rigveda to show that the whole of the Gangetic provinces down to Assam was covered by a sea, extending along the foot of the Himālaya in Rigvedic times, and the Gangā, the most sacred river of the Aryans in later times, was only a very small stream in those days, discharging her waters into the Eastern Sea (the *Pūrva Samudra*, as it is called in the Rigveda), not very far from our present Hardwar. Hence she was not counted among the large rivers of the ancient Punjab, as it then was, and has been cited only once in the Rigveda to share a general praise of the Punjab rivers. (Rv. x. 75). Thus, the topography of the Punjab in Rigvedic times included in its southern and eastern boundaries large seas that entirely cut off the Province from the Southern Continent, or the Deccan. The climate of the Punjab also was extremely cold, as will appear from the fact that the year in the Rigveda was called by the name of *Hima* or Winter (Rv. i. 64, 14 ; ii. 1, 11 ; 33, 2 ; v. 54, 15 ; vi. 10, 7 &c). Now Geologists have ascertained the age of this different distribution of land and water and the prevalence of a cold climate in the Punjab to be the Pleistocene, or the post-Pleistocene epoch, and put it down between 50,000 and 25,000 B. C. Assuming that this lower estimate is correct, Rigvedic civilisation must be regarded as very old, at least older than any civilisation that History knows of. Geologists have admitted that, with the upheaval of the sea-bed in Rajputana, and the formation of the Gangetic plains by the accumulated alluvium brought down into the *Pūrva Samudra* by the Himalayan rivers, the climate of the Punjab changed from cold to hot, rain-fall became scanty, and the glaciers on the lower slopes of the Himalaya disappeared. With the disappearance of seas from the vicinity of the Punjab and of glaciers near the source of the Sarasvatī, and a scanty rain-fall, she became attenuated into an insignificant stream and ultimately got herself lost in the sands of the

desert of Rajputana. These are undoubted facts, proved by the internal evidence of the Rigveda, which make it necessary for us to change our idea of, and outlook upon ancient Indian history. We have got to realise for our self-consciousness as a nation that our ancient ancestors lived in this land from time immemorial, and developed a culture and civilisation, all their own, at a remote antiquity, when the ancient civilised nations of the world, now no more, were in their infancy, and "wrapped up in their winter sleep." Every atom in this ancient land is hallowed and sanctified with the dust of the feet of our glorious ancestors, and this land was truly their Mother-land, and the progenitor of their civilisation. Can there be any Aryan Hindu at the present day who will not feel a patriotic sentiment for this Holy Mother, and who will consider any sacrifice too great for reviving her ancient glory?

The *Second Great Message* of the Vedas is that our ancient ancestors were a united people, without any division into numerous castes, as at present, and without any restriction as regards inter-marriage and inter-dining. The Rigvedic *mantras* were composed during three long ages (Rv. iii. 32, 13 ; vi. 21, 5) and there is only one *mantra* in the *Tenth Mandala*, probably composed in the third or the latest age of the Rigvedic period, which distinctly mentions the four castes (Rv. x. 90, 12). Scholars are disposed to look upon this *mantra* as a later interpolation made by designing men, but I do not share this view. The existence of this *mantra* undoubtedly goes to show that the four castes were being gradually evolved in Aryan society, according to the particular tendencies (*gunas*) and occupations of men, but there is nothing to prove that the caste-rules were hard and fast, as at present, and prevented any worthy man of a particular class or caste from being admitted into another. These castes were more like *classes* than anything else, with no bar against inter-dining and inter-marriage. The son of a Risi was a physician and his daughter a grinder of corn (Rv. ix. 112, 3), and the son of a female slave became a Risi in those days (*Ait. Bráh.* ii. 8, 1; *Kaus. Bráh.* xii. 3). The latter whose name was Kavasa was greeted by Vasistha, Visvamitra, Bharadvája, Vámadeva &c., not only as their equal, but even as superior to them in some respects. Vedavyása too was not born of a Brahmin mother, and Risis married princesses, and kings the daughters of Brahmins and Risis. We all know that the great king Yayáti married Devayáni, the daughter of Sukráchárya, and the great king Sántanu married the daughter of a fisherman in the Epic age, without any blame. In the *Bhágavata Purána* we find that the Ksatriya clan, known as Dhástra, became Brahmins (ix. *Story of Ila*), and Gárgya, Taryáruni, Kavi, and Puskáráruni, though originally Ksatriyas, became Brahmin (*Ibid ix. Story of the Purus*). Bharadvája, though a Brahmin, was adopted by the Ksatriya king, Bharata, as his son (*Ibid*). Nábhága, though originally a Ksatriya, became a Vaisya,

(ix. *Story of Ilā*). The Aryan people, in Vedic times, bore only one name, viz., that of Visas, and the four castes sprang out of this body, according to their *gūnas* and occupations. It would thus appear that there was no caste system in early Vedic times, in the present sense of the term, and if there were classes, they too were pliant and elastic enough to admit others into their folds. As regards inter-dining, no restriction whatever appears to have existed. Cooks were usually recruited from the Sudra caste, and the custom continued down to the Epic age and even later. Only those, who were engaged in unclean occupations and led unclean lives themselves, were shunned socially to a certain extent, but not to the extent of being regarded as *Pariahs*, for we find a Vyādha (known as Dharma-Vyādha in the *Mahabharata*) occupying the position of a religious teacher, to whom even pious Brahmins resorted for religious instructions. Vaisya Tulādhāra also was a spiritual preceptor even of Brahmins. We thus find that the present baneful effects of the caste system, and caste prejudices did not exist in ancient times, far less in Rigvedic times, and the Aryans were liberal in their views, and united as a homogeneous people. If we really respect the Vedas as our holy Scripture, we cannot afford to disregard their teachings, and allow our narrow prejudices to take their place. A diligent study of the Vedas is essentially necessary for finding ways and means for the uplift and unification of the Hindus as a living and progressive nation.

The *Third Great Message* of the Vedas is that woman should be looked upon as an equal of man, possessing equal rights and privileges. The status of the Aryan woman in the Vedic age was high. She was never married in her infancy, and was allowed to grow up into youthful womanhood in her father's home, and to make a suitable choice of her husband. She was the mistress of her own house, having complete control over the domestic servants, performed the daily worship of Fire and of the Devas with her husband, and was honoured and respected by her husband, children and relations. Ladies could become Risis, and Ghosa, Lopamudra, and Visvavārā composed Vedic hymns, the last performing the duties of a Hotri also at a sacrifice. Vigorous and noble womanhood brought forth vigorous and noble progeny, and the ancient Aryan nation was not a nation of weaklings and cowards, without any stamina or back-bone. Even Risis prayed for the birth of sons who would be brave, noble-minded, well-versed in Vedic lore, capable of riding on brave steeds and meeting their enemies on the battle-fields (Rv. v. 23, 1, 2; vi. 31, 1). Women moulded the minds of their sons, and encouraged them to be brave, truthful and fearless in the expression of their opinions, even on the occasion of the election of a king by the people (A. V. iii. 4, 3). Such was the influence wielded by women in Vedic times in matters domestic, social and political. With degraded womanhood in our midst, we cannot aspire to be a great nation, and

our first and foremost duty should be to restore womanhood to its former status, privileges and enlightenment.

The *Fourth Great Message* of the Vedas is that our ancient ancestors were a people with democratic instincts, free from the domination of Autocrats, Plutocrats or Priestcrafts, and framed their own constitution, elected their own king, willingly paid taxes for the maintenance of the Government presided over by the king and his representative councils, withheld the payment of their taxes, if the Government failed to discharge its duties properly, and even deposed the king when he proved to be tyrannical or oppressive. Our present English rulers miss no opportunity for continually dinning into our ears that the democratic spirit never existed in the Indian people, and it is they who have been introducing democratic institutions for the first time in Indian soil, and that our people must pass through a long period of tutelage under them before they could think of having fully developed democratic institutions of their own. I have no hesitation in saying that the Vedas give a lie direct to these assumptions. Let me give the translation of a few passages of the Vedas in support of my assertion. In the Rigveda (x. 124, 8) we come across the passage *Viso na rājānam vrinānā*, which means "like people or subjects choosing or electing a king." There is another hymn (Rv. x. 173) which indicates that the stability of a king on the throne was contingent on the good will of his subjects. Below I give the translation of a few Rigvedic verses, as made by Prof. Wilson :

"I (the priest) have consecrated thee (Raja) ; come amongst us, be steady and unvacillating : *May all thy subjects desire thee (for their king) ; may the kingdom never fall from thee.*

"Come into this (kingdom), *mayest thou be never deposed ; unvacillating as a mountain, stand firm here ; like Indra, establish thy kingdom in this world.*

"With a constant oblation, we handle the constant Soma ; therefore *may Indra render thy subject people payers of (their) taxes.*"

The Atharva-veda, though much later than the Rigveda in point of time, has the following *mantras* (iii. 4, 2, 3) :

"The tribesmen shall elect thee for the kingship.

These five celestial regions shall elect thee.

Kinsmen, inviting thee, shall go to meet thee.

With thee go Agni as an active herald.

Let women and their sons be friendly-minded.

Thou, mighty one, shalt see abundant tribute."

The last but one line goes to show that the voices of women also counted, and were an important factor in moulding public opinion, represented through their sons, as they took an intelligent interest in the welfare of the State.

As it is quite natural for us to attribute the same custom to our Gods as to ourselves, we come across the following remarkable passage in the *Aitareya Brâhmana* (i. 14): "The Devas said, 'it is on account of our having no king that the Asuras defeat us. Let us elect a king.' All consented. *They elected Soma their king.* Headed by king Soma, they were victorious in all directions." There is also a similar significant passage in the *Taittirîya Brâhmana* (i. 5, 9) which I refrain from quoting here.

In Vâlmiki's *Râmâyana* (ii. 2), we find king Dasaratha summoning the Popular Assembly for obtaining the sanction of his people to his nomination of Râma as his successor. In the *Mahâbhârata* (Santi Parva, Ch. 67) also, we find the people electing Manu as their king, and promising willing subordination to him and the voluntary payment of taxes, or certain shares of their produce, into the Royal Treasury, in return for their protection and good Government. Down to the age of the Buddha, the elective principle was in force among the various Sâkya clans, and *Vox populi* was looked upon as *Vox Dei*.

From these brief references you will find that the spirit of democracy is ingrained in the very nature of the Indo-Aryans, and it is only adverse circumstances that have been instrumental in smothering it for a time. If we would only study the Vedas and our ancient literature and history, we should be able to draw inspiration from them in our activities for resuscitating this moribund nation into new life and vigour.

The *Fifth Great Message* of the Vedas is that we can build a Greater India and spread Aryan culture all over the world as our ancient ancestors did in the Vedic times, uplifting the human race, and as was done by Buddhist missionaries going abroad from India in still later times. The Rigvedic Panis, Vaniks or Aryan merchants visited the then known world in their merchant-ships, which the Rigveda makes frequent mention of, bringing wealth into our country from abroad and spreading Aryan culture in the Deccan, Mesopotamia, Phœnicia and Egypt. Prof. Nilsson has discovered relics of an ancient civilisation on the coasts of far-off Norway, which he surmises to have been taken there by traders who resembled the Hindus (*Prehistoric Times* pp. 67-71). It has also been surmised that Aryan traders visited China, Japan, and probably far-off America in subsequent times, establishing colonies and spreading Aryan culture among various peoples. This spirit of adventure and missionary enterprise continued down to the latest Buddhistic age, when our ancestors founded colonies and built beautiful edifices and temples in Java, Siam, Cambodia, Champa and even in parts of Western Asia, where the relics of a wonderful civilisation still bear eloquent testimony to their enterprise and humanitarian activities. This spirit of enterprise was subsequently cramped by illiberal laws and narrow restrictions that sought to maintain

the purity of the Aryan people by isolating them from the contact and contamination of the outer world, and of those communities in India itself, which were mostly non-Aryan and regarded as "untouchables." The inevitable result was the division of the Indian People into innumerable castes, classes, sects and tribes, each isolated from and independent of the other, with no internal cement or cohesion. This spirit of division and isolation was carried even into the main Aryan castes, until at the present day we find each caste intersected into several sub-divisions, each disjointed from the other, which do not inter-dine or inter-marry. The work of disintegration was further accelerated by the forging of new social and religious fetters, which restrained national activities and reduced the nation to a nation of slaves. These easily and naturally paved the way for foreign domination, and to-day we witness the sorry spectacle of a mighty nation rolling in the mire of social, moral, spiritual and political degradation, quite helpless and powerless to regain its ancient footing. We can never aspire to be a free and united nation, unless and until we discard the bonds and barriers, mostly self-imposed, that separate us from one another and have crushed out our very life and reduced us to helots and galley-slaves.

The *Sixth Great Message* of the Vedas is that we should look to the land as the source of our wealth and support, and betake ourselves to agriculture in right earnest, adopting, of course, the present improved scientific methods, and manufacture all the necessaries of our life including our clothing. The Vedic Aryans were eminently an agricultural people, possessing vast herds of cattle which were regarded as wealth, and manufacturing everything that they required for their use. We are at the present day sorely in need of sufficient food-grains for our daily consumption and also of nourishing milk for ourselves and our children. Theoretically we pose ourselves as the worshippers of the "Cow-Mother" (*Gābhi-Mátá* or *Gābhi-Devatá*), but in practice we are probably the worst sinners against her in the present civilised world. Agriculture, Cattle-rearing, and Industries were the principal occupations of our ancient ancestors; but, under the influence of morbid sentimentalism in a later age, we relegated them all to the illiterate masses, with the deplorable result that they have deteriorated sadly in their hands, and the nation is now going half starved, half naked, without any nourishment, and entirely dependent upon other nations for the necessaries of their life. We have to get over our morbid sentiments and prejudices, and should be ready now to put our hands to the plough, irrespective of caste or social position, and to rear up noble breeds of milch-cows. Look at the tender and humane feelings, and the solicitude and anxiety that our Aryan ancestors felt and expressed in their many hymns to the Devas for the protection and safety of their kine, which they came to look upon as *Devatàs*. (Rv. vi. 28). Let us take this important message of the Vedas to heart,

if we really want to survive as a nation and be a self-contained people, independent of any extraneous help for our support.

The *Seventh Great Message of the Vedas* is that we have got to know ourselves and realise Brahman in our souls, and through Brahman, the unity of the human race, and thus to effect our emancipation from the bonds of superstitions that serve only to retard our spiritual progress and prevent us from living up to the highest ideals of true manhood. We should learn to see God in everything and everything in God. Our love of God should be as wide as the Universe itself, comprising within its vast compass not only humanity as a whole, without any distinction of race, caste or creed, but also life in every shape and form; and our mind and soul should be saturated with a world-wide good-will and compassion for all living creatures, such as the great Buddha felt and taught to mankind, and such as our Risis and Sannyasis sacrificed and are still sacrificing everything to cultivate and realise. This is the greatest of all the Messages of the Vedas, and the world is now eagerly waiting to receive it. But it is we who have to deliver it, and by delivering it, bring peace and happiness among the human races who, in their mad pursuit after self-aggrandisement, have been, at the present moment, cutting each other's throats, like brute savages, and thwarting, oppressing, and annihilating each other. If we are to assume once again the *role* of world-teachers after the manner of our glorious ancestors, we have to go through a long process of self-denying, rigorous discipline, such as is inculcated by the rules of *Brahmacharya*, and after realising the great spiritual truths through clear intuition, should be prepared to sacrifice everything, and lay down our very lives for accomplishing the good of the world.*

BUDDHA'S METHOD OF TEACHING

BY RAMAN CHANDRA BHATTACHARYYA, B.A.

"Can you, O Lord," enquired the bereaved mother, "can you give life to the dead?"

"Yes, mother, I can," replied the Compassionate One.

"You can revive the dead!"—A cry of joy went out of her. She placed her dead child at the feet of the Master and entreated him to restore its life.

The gracious head nodded acquiescence. The light of hope suffused her countenance.

"But," the Lord said, "you must get me something."

* From his address as President of the Saraswata Sammelana and the Veda Sammelana of the Gurnkula University in connection with the Silver Jubilee celebration on the 16th March, 1927.

"Anything the Blessed One commands. There is nothing dearer to me than my child,—I can give my life for it."

"I want a handful of sesame seeds."

"Oh, that is easy!"

"A handful from a home where none has ever died."

The mother hurried away to get the sesame seeds. She stopped at the first door and begged for them. The mistress of the house readily gave her a handful.

"But has any of your house ever died?"

"Many, mother," was the mournful reply.

She did not wait. At the next door the same doleful reply met her eager enquiry. And thus she went on anxiously seeking a house where death had not visited, till her feet were tired and sore and she could walk no more. Then suddenly the truth flashed in her mind. Calm and peace filled her heart. The secret of death was now within her comprehension and the meaning of the Lord's action became clear.

So simple and dramatic and yet so practical was the method of the Lord's teaching! The wisdom of it was that it did not attempt to deal with the enquirer's crude and defective thoughts in a learned way. It carried the enquirer imperceptibly to a finer world of perception. It forced the enquirer to look within himself for the light to penetrate the dark mysteries of life and death. A great teacher is also a great artist.

The Lord did not favour useless argumentation. But he had to meet the sophists of the day. It was an age when no less than sixty-two religious orders contended with each other chiefly on philosophical grounds;¹ and the vanquished had to accept as a disciple the doctrines of the victor. In that age villagers would erect *Paribbâjakârâms* and *Kutuhala-sâlâs*² and invite there the thinkers and leaders of various religious orders for philosophical discussions. "In no other age and country do we find so universally diffused among all classes of the people so earnest a spirit of enquiry, so impartial and deep a respect for all who posed as teachers, however contradictory their doctrines might be."³ The times demanded great proficiency in logic; and the Lord preferred a Socratic position.

Whenever a questioner approached him, the aim of Gotama was to find out if he had come with a preconceived theory or dogma regarding the question. "What do you think of it?" he would ask the enquirer. The answer would give him an idea of the enquirer's mental position.⁴ He would take up the answer and analyse it, and by questionings and cross-questionings, push the questioner by degrees to his own conclusion. Gotama was wise enough not to commit himself to anything. "So you see," he would conclude, "your last word does not tally with your first, your first with your last."

¹ *Brahmajala Sutta.*

² *Paribbajaka*—a wandering monk; *Aram*—resting place; *Kutuhala*—curiosity; *Sala*—hall.

³ Rhys Davids: *Buddhism*, p. 26.

⁴ Cf. "Gotama puts himself as far as possible in the mental position of the questioner. He attacks none of his cherished convictions."—*Dialogues of the Buddha* by Rhys Davids, p. 206.

King Ajatasatru of Magadha approached the Lord with a question and respectfully begged his permission to put it to him.

"Ask, O King, whatsoever you desire," the Blessed One said.

The King gracefully put his question.

"Do you admit to us, O King, that you have put the same question to other recluses or to Brahmanas?"

"I do, Lord."

"Then tell us how they answered it, if you do not mind."

"I have no objection where the Blessed One and others like him are." And the King proceeded to describe at length the answers he received from other teachers. The Lord listened to him to the end, and then asked him :

"But what do you think, O King, that being so, is there or is there not, some fruit, visible in this world, of the life of a recluse?"⁵ The King gave his answer. The questions and answers went on till the questioner reached his conclusion and was satisfied. The dignity of the method can hardly be overestimated. The efficiency of it was profound.

Nigganthaputta was pushed to the conclusion that his theory about Atma was faulty. "But, what then is the truth according to you?" he asked. But the Buddha would not answer this question. He kept himself clean of any dogma. When the questioner was really disposed to receive truth, that is, when he, as the result of a discussion, had reached the stage of a *Srotâpanna*,⁶ the Buddha would call his attention to the discipline enunciated by him. "It is vain," he would say, "it is vain to consider the origin and the elements of fire, when you are actually in it. It is for you to come out of it as soon as possible."

Mâlunkyaputta of the Order was once troubled by many unprofitable doubts. "These theories," he reflected, "which the Blessed One has left unelucidated, has set aside and rejected,—that the world is eternal, that the world is not eternal, that the world is finite, that the world is infinite, that the soul and the body are identical, that the soul is one thing and the body another, that the saint exists after death, that the saint does not exist after death, etc. etc.—these the Blessed One does not elucidate to me. And the fact that the Blessed One does not elucidate them to me does not please me or suit me."

His mind was much agitated and he drew near the Lord. He put the question to him and added that "if the Blessed One would not elucidate to him, either that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal, . . . or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death, in that case he would abandon religious training and return to the life of a layman." "If the Blessed One does not know the answers," he remarked, "the only upright thing for one who does not know, or who has not that insight, is to say, 'I do not know; I have not that insight.' "

"Pray, Mâlunkyaputta," calmly began the Lord, "did I ever say to you, 'Come, Mâlunkyaputta, lead the religious life under me, and I will

⁵ *Samannaphala Sutta* translated by Rhys Davids.

⁶ *Srota*—current; *Apanna*—Taken to.

elucidate to you either that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal, . . . or that the saint neither exists nor does not exist after death'?"

"Nay, verily, Reverend Sir."

"Or did you ever say to me, 'Reverend Sir, I will lead the religious life under the Blessed One on condition that the Blessed One elucidate to me either that the world is eternal or that the world is not eternal etc.'?"

"Nay, verily, Reverend Sir."

" . . . Mâlunkyaputta, any one who should say 'I will not lead the religious life under the Blessed One until the Blessed One shall elucidate to me either that the world is eternal, or that the world is not eternal etc.' that person would die, Mâlunkyaputta, before the Tathâgata had ever elucidated this to him.

"It is as if, Mâlunkyaputta, a man had been wounded by an arrow thickly smeared with poison, and his friends and companions, his relatives and kinsfolk, were to procure for him a physician or surgeon; and the sick man were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learnt whether the man who wounded me belonged to the warrior caste, or to the Brahman caste, or to the agricultural caste or to the menial caste.'

"Or again he were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learnt whether the man who wounded me was tall, or short, or of the middle height.'

"Or again he were to say, 'I will not have this arrow taken out until I have learnt whether the bow which wounded me was a câpa or a kodanda.' . . .

"The religious life, Mâlunkyaputta, does not depend on any dogma, on the finitude or infinitude of the world or the soul. Whether the dogma obtain, Mâlunkyaputta, that the world or soul is eternal or that the world or soul is not eternal, there still remain birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief and despair, for the extinction of which in the present life I am prescribing.

"All that is unprofitable I have not elucidated . . . and what, Mâlunkyaputta, have I elucidated? Misery have I elucidated; the origin of misery have I elucidated; the cessation of misery and the path leading to the cessation have I elucidated. And why, Mâlunkyaputta, have I elucidated this? Because Mâlunkyaputta, this does profit, has to do with the fundamentals of religion and tends to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom and Nirvana. . . ."

The discontent was gone and the venerable Mâlunkyaputta applauded the speech of the Blessed One.⁷

The dialogue helps us to see into Buddha's attitude, his matter-of-fact disposition and his aversion for unprofitable discussion.⁸

⁷ Condensed from Warren's *Buddhism in Translation*.

⁸ Cf. "Gotama, the recluse, holds aloof from . . . wrangling phrases."—*Brahmajala Sutta*.

To meet the well-tutored sophists of his day, Buddha propounded four dialectic methods :

- (1) *Patipuccha-vyâkaraniya*
- (2) *Ekamsa-vyâkaraniya*
- (3) *Vibhajja-vyâkaraniya*
- (4) *Thapaniya*

By the first method, he used to lead the questioner to his conclusion by questionings and cross-questionings. This method has already been dwelt on at length. The second method he would resort to when he would give a direct reply to the question of an enquirer without entering into a discussion with him. Sometimes the Lord would analyse a complicated question and answer it piecemeal. This was his third method. There were dogmatic sophists again. They had to be disentangled from their false preconceptions. With suitable questions the Lord would elucidate to them the shortcomings and vagaries of their dogmas, as he did in the case of Nigganthaputta mentioned above. This method was called *Thapaniya*.⁹

And this was not all. He had many more less distinctive methods of teaching his disciples in the Order. A single line of training does not suit all temperaments. Buddha understood this perfectly well. To the Panchavaggiyas, the first five disciples, he denounced asceticism, to Mahâkâssapa he applauded it. He would not allow Devadatta to make such ascetic rules as would be binding on all the monks of the Order.

Parables and stories played a prominent part in his discussions. A profound sympathy for the enquirers always distinguished his instructions. A brother of the Order, failing in his repeated efforts to subdue carnal passions, lamented much. When he was brought before the Lord, the Lord solaced him by repeating to him a story of one of his own past births. He, in that birth, lived on the Himalayas as an ascetic. Once he came down to visit the kingdom of Benares. The king of Benares was struck with his glorious appearance and requested him to live in his capital. A house was built for him in a pleasant garden and he took his residence there. Every day he went through the air to receive his food in the palace. After a time the king was absent from the capital on some account, and the queen had to look after the saint's comforts. And by and by the saint became entangled in the charms of the queen. He lost all his powers and grace. When the king came back, he spoke to him of his sad plight and again retired to the Himalayas for harder austerities.¹⁰ "If the would-be Buddha," the Blessed One concluded, "could be so smitten by *kâma*, you have no reason to lament." The brother was cheered up to fight the battle anew.

"Take a man where he stands, and give him a push upwards," says Swami Vivekananda. The great teacher of the sixth century B. C. was also wise enough to follow this most efficacious method of teaching. Srigâla, after his bath, saluted all the quarters of the earth. Being

⁹ Vide *Spread of Buddhism* by Dr. N. Datta, M.A. Ph.D.

¹⁰ *Sankalpa-jataka*.

questioned by the Buddha, he stated that his deceased father had asked him to do so.¹¹ The wise Lord did not smile at the crudity of the idea. He took the man where he stood and advised him to salute the guardian deities of the quarters. He led him from darkness to some light,—he gave him a push upwards.

A FRENCH CRITIC ON THE VEDANTA MOVEMENT

“I turn to men and women of good faith, believing themselves genuine Christians yet following the teaching of Vedanta and adhering to the postulate,—much in vogue to-day,—that all religions are of equal value ; and I feel it my duty to warn them that even lavish homage paid to Christ simply as an avatar among the others,—Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, Mohammed,—ought not to make them forget that this is the first step on the road to dechristianization.”

These strange words were uttered in the pages of the *Forum* of New York by M. Jules Bois, an eminent philosopher and litterateur of France. M. Bois has been contributing a series of articles in that well-known monthly on the New Religions of America. His contribution in the March number was on the Hindu Cults. Our readers are aware that since Swami Vivekananda's triumph in the Chicago Parliament of Religions, the Vedanta movement has been making steady head-way in the New World. We have now six well-established centres there. M. Bois appears to have visited some of them and closely followed their activity, for he gives a generally correct description of their ideals and work in his article. He however has concluded his essay with certain observations which show that he has missed their true import, and which therefore require to be examined.

M. Bois' name is not quite unfamiliar to our readers. In the March of 1925, we had the pleasure of publishing a poem by him on Swami Vivekananda, in course of which he thus addresses the Swami :

The angles of Vinci turn away, jealous,
So much infinite science irradiates around your brow.

¹¹ *Sigalavado Sutta.*

Purity meditates within your eyes where fools see madness. . . .
 You the initiator, sweet like Evening,
 O my fervor unique, O brother, O master,
 You the prophet who proclaimed solely the Ideal,
 Hail to you! my thanks! for, I drew from your sidereal heart
 And from your songs, the august strength, indispensable,
 In order to scorn the world, yet to love the earth.

Before that in our March issue of 1918, we published an English translation of the eighth chapter of his book *Visions de l'Inde*, which he has named *L'Exstase*, "The Ecstasy," and which contains an account of his visit to the Belur monastery, the headquarters of the Ramakrishna Order. In fact M. Bois was well acquainted with Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda had passed some weeks in his house as his guest, in the year 1900, and had him as one of his companions during his travel in Eastern Europe and the Near East later on. Swami Vivekananda thus writes of him in his *Memoirs of European Travel* :

Monsieur Jules Bois is a famous writer; he is particularly an adept in the discovery of historical truths in the different religions and superstitions. He has written a famous book putting into historical form the devil-worship, sorcery, necromancy, incantation and such other rites that were in vogue in Mediæval Europe and the traces of them that obtain to this day. He is a good poet, and is an advocate of the Indian Vedantic ideas that have crept into the great French poets, such as Victor Hugo and Lamartine and others, and the great German poets, such as Goethe, Schiller and the rest. M. Jules Bois is very modest and gentle, and though a man of ordinary means, he very cordially received me as a guest into his house in Paris. . .

From his poem and from what he has said in his *Visions de l'Inde* and in the *Forum* article, we feel that M. Bois entertains a high regard for the Swami. The way in which he has depicted our ideals and activities is certainly generous. He has a good word to say of our Swamis in America, and quotes "the declaration of our faith" from the introductory page of Swami Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga* :

Each soul is potentially divine. The goal is to manifest this divinity within by controlling nature, external and internal. Do this either by work or worship or psychic control or philosophy,—by one or more or all of these,—and be free. This is the whole of religion; doctrines, dogmas, rituals, books, temples, and forms are but secondary details.

He also quotes Swami Paramananda, "the best known present-day Swami" :

We believe firmly that the revelations of the saints and sages and seers everywhere are one. God is One, Spirit is One. We are all children of that One; and we cannot serve that One and love that One unless our love makes us include all His children,—east, west, north, south, everywhere. To uphold this unity is the chief aim of our work.

One would think that these are quite good ideas and no illumined mind would take exception to them. Yet M. Bois thinks that these would have dire consequences on the American mind.

We have seen from the words of Swami Vivekananda that M. Bois was keenly observing the influence of Vedanta on the modern European literature. The Vedanta philosophy had been much in his mind even before he met Swami Vivekananda. He says: "When the Congress of Religions was in progress in Chicago, I, in Paris, eagerly followed its debates. One declaration which arrested my attention was that of the young Hindu prophet promulgating a 'universal religion.'" This dwelt in his mind and then in 1900 he was one day suddenly invited to meet the Swami at the home of a rich American friend in Paris. What happened next is best narrated in his own words:

After an informal conference Vivekananda approached me as though we had known each other for a long time. A brief conversation followed, at the end of which he startled me by proposing to come and live with me. Expressing my sense of the honour his suggestion implied, I reminded him of the luxury and attention he was enjoying and explained that I was only a young writer who could offer him very little in the way of comfort.

"I am a monk and a mendicant," was the reply. "I can sleep on the ground or on the floor. Our luxury will be the wisdom of the masters. I will bring my pipe with me, and upon its incense will rise the verses of the Vedas and Upanishads."

Next day the Swami arrived with a small valise.

Upto that time M. Bois had associated with Brahmans, Buddhists, pundits, and sannyasins, but he had met none so exceptional as the Swami. He found the divine spark grow effulgent in him. Says M. Bois:*

Through his life the old wisdom of India spoke to me. In the tradition of the Orient, oral initiation is more important than reliance upon the written word. The Asiatic has disciples while we have pupils. His conviction is that knowledge, like the secrets of the heart, is to be transmitted only at the favorable moment.

* We are indebted to the Editor, *Forum*, for permission to quote from M. Bois' article.—*Editor, P.B.*

At that time I was living in the rue Gazan, facing the Parc Montsouris. There, far from the hum and drum of the city, the days flowed by in unbroken calm and a quasi-solitude. From the balcony one looked out over a miniature Switzerland of hills, valleys, and artificial lakes bathed in radiant sunlight. At the close of the day, after having attended to my own affairs, I would find Vivekananda there, scarcely having moved from the spot where I had left him, but having smoked and meditated much. This monk of Shiva had gone up and down the earth, preaching his alluring but terrible gospel, proclaiming the illusion of the external world and our personality, and the reality of one single Being behind the multiform appearance of things and creatures. Marvelous evenings in the pure intoxication of metaphysics and nature! The perfume of young flowers and the grave Hindu plain-song; a Parisian spring and a breeze from the Ganges; the semi-obscure glamour of the stars, while the messenger of the old Barattha, with his dark nimbus of hair, his imposing carriage, his prominent eyes now widely open, now veiled by heavy lids, sat like a Buddha of the Himalayas transported to a suburb on the Seine. It was not the India of the fakirs and the cranks, but the magical land of beauty and wisdom. And the five yogas, transmitted from time immemorial by the *guru* (master) to the *chela* (disciple) revealed once more, this time to a young French poet, their methods for the experimental union of the individual with himself first and then with the divine.

It would take too long to give even a slight account of this psychological teaching, which is preserved to a few. William James summed it up when he said, "The different yogas are based on persevering exercises; and the diet, posture, breathing, intellectual concentration, and moral discipline help the disciple to overcome the obscuration of his lower nature sufficiently to come face to face with facts which instinct and reason alone can never meet." Here I am laying stress on the human side of the teacher. Vivekananda was a loyal disciple of his master, Ramakrishna, who had been the central influence in his youth and to whom the prince of orientalists, Max Müller, referred as "a real Mahatma." In very truth a real one, having nothing in common with those false Mahatmas whose chief claim to fame depended upon silly prodigies of legerdemain.

The Swami's emotion was profound when he told me of his first meeting with the last great saint of his race. . . .

After a long silence, and in a voice that had fallen to a whisper, my companion continued:

"He had called me Vivekananda (Happy Discrimination), but after his death I was as though mad. I felt as if I had lost my soul. I became a sannyasin, throwing aside everything, even to clothing. I traversed India on foot, covered with ashes, taking meals now with rajahs, now with the humblest peasants, sleeping on porches or in trees, bewailing the loss of my guru and vowing to render immortal the gospel I had received from him. When I felt morally strengthened by this sacrificial wandering, I set out for America. There my lectures permitted me to amass a certain sum which does not belong to me. It is in the

hands of an American friend and will be devoted to the monastery of Ramakrishna near the Ganges, and then I too shall die.”*

That evening I had the intuition that the prophesy would not be long of fulfilment. Death was already hovering over Vivekananda; quite visibly it was doing its work within his robust body, broken by too arduous efforts. I took him to the best doctors in Paris, but they shook their heads.

We left the city at the moment when it was in gala attire for the great exposition in 1900. En route toward Jerusalem and Benares, with chosen companions, we visited Constantinople, Greece, and Egypt. At Port Said we parted. The monk of Shiva took the steamer for India, while I decided to sail for Palestine to spend Christmas in Bethlehem. Vivekananda's road led to Nirvana, mine to Calvary.

M. Bois next met the Swami at Belur. It will not be out of place to reproduce extracts from the account of that visit, as it appeared in translation in our issue of March, 1918:

We have fled past the town. The docks with their length of twelve English miles have come to an end. The water of the Ganges are rising around us, and a favourable tide is carrying us towards the monastery all white—in its palmgrove—over which rises the trident of the Pagoda—the monastery beckons to us from its complaisant terraces.

The American lady has become grave. She remembers having heard at New York this Vivekananda who charms the Souls. She agreed at once when I asked her to accompany me. She is an indefatigable traveller. I was presented to her at Paris during the Exposition (Exhibition). We met since at Cairo and again in Calcutta, yesterday, before the Great Eastern Hotel. I recognised her by her steely glance and her profile—chaste and insatiate. “How small is the world,” she cried. “The earth is only a crossway where wanderers cross each other.” Vivekananda is standing on the terrace. His big eyes seemed to have eaten up his visage.

This man—with almost a swarthy complexion—and dressed as the Aryans of six thousand years ago—born so far from my corner of the earth—speaking another tongue and adoring another God has been my best friend. . . . He incarnated for me—with his genius and his perilous frenzy—that India which I cherish as the fatherland of my dreams—the Eden where lives the Ideal. . . .

These are the first words at the threshold of his house—“I am free, my friend—I am liberated anew. I have given all. The money weighed me down like chains. I am now the poorest man in the poorest country in the world. But the House of Ramakrishna has been built and his spiritual family has received a shelter.”

He saw the American and saluted her with a gentle gesture which has become in the West the attitude of prayer—the hands joined—the

* It is doubtful if the Swami has been correctly reported here,—for there are certain inaccuracies of statement which could scarcely be due to the Swami.—*Editor, P.B.*

head inclined. It is thus in the images—the spouses of the Hindu Gods are represented before the celestial masters.

Then he presented us to his people saying—“Behold my brothers and my children,” under their splendid turbans—the young men smiled at us—with still ingenuous eyes of the apprentices of life. The old people snatched themselves off from their meditation of the Vedas—their bent foreheads marked with the Shivaic Symbol. Sudras—Brahmans—and Parrias also were united here, as, for the Prophet the caste is abolished. God is equally present in all. He took a *narghilé* (Hooka pipe) which a disciple was smoking and drew from it a puff which perfumed the air round as with an odour of the rose. Then he gave us some lotus flowers.—“Come upon the terraces” said he, “my friends are about to prepare the tiffin.” (In Anglo-India they call thus, the repast of the middle of the day.) From there we saw the most moving spectacle. It was India—her fields fresh under the burning sun—the ponds like some mirrors which a goddess might have let fall in her flight—the forests (from afar) soft like velvet fleece— and the Ganges like a virile arm which folds the earth—in love.

On the other side of the stream a pagoda reared its spire. Near it a great banyan tree spread its enormous branches which striking the descending roots into the soil had transformed themselves into separate trees.—Under its shade my master Ramakrishna entered for the first time into “Samadhi,” that is to say—into an ecstasy in which he was merged into the Godhead. For us the spot is as sacred as the Bodhi tree at Bodh Gaya, near which Gautama became conscious of his mission.

Half an hour afterwards—in his cell Vivekananda himself served us the “tiffin” which consisted of eggs, fresh milk, aromatic grains and mangoes—fruits which were to us more exquisite than peaches. But he himself could not sit with us. He begged to be excused for not giving us meat. The monastery made no use of it.

Strange apartment this of the Swami where the nude simplicity of a Hindu anchorite was mixed up with the practical furniture of a Western philosopher—rocking chair, a library of varied works where Emerson and Spencer elbowed the indigenous publications gathered in rolls.

A disciple offered us some betels in a green leaf. They all came from the monastery garden where they had been gathered. I chewed. A taste of nicotine and flower filled my mouth—my teeth became red.

“Narcotics are smoked or chewed all over India” said the Sanyasi with a smile. “For us, life is a dream and what you call dream among yourselves is for us the sole reality. All that are for you true, veritable and real—because of their visible and tangible attribute are, for us a sport of Maya—a mere Illusion—that which changes and passes away is not worth the trouble of being loved—nor even of being looked at. The cities, the luxury, and the glories, the civilisations and the prodigies of material science—we have known them all for centuries and we are disgusted with the usage. Childish sports devised for children.

“We are awakened from the brutalising dream of which you are still under the influence. We shut the eyes, retain our breath and sit under the soft shadow of the trees in front of the primitive fire. The

infinite then opens to us the marvellous doors and we enter into the inner world which is the only truth. There—see for yourself. There are few Europeans who have penetrated these mysteries.”

We leaned towards the window of the cell. A clock struck. In the garden under an Indian fig tree the monks were seated in a circle. They balanced the head and the back in a rhythmic movement. He who had just accompanied us sang in a strange voice—recalling our plain-chant but more strident and more joyous. In the centre a fire burnt away into grey cinders. At the side of the fire the trident of Shiva was planted dressed in garlands, all fixed their eyes upon the flame where dwelt the divinity. A great peace soared up from the organisms hypnotised by the igneous soul—a peace frightful to us whom activity turns tipsy—a peace from which rose up the chant as on a sonorous wing—and the golden bees danced over the ecstatic heads in streaks of sunlight, while from inside the sacred stables the cows raised their venerable heads associating themselves with the strange cult in which man re-enters into universal nature and is annihilated without death.

After all this, the conclusion of the *Forum* article comes as a surprise. This is what M. Bois writes :

As to the writer of this essay, his conclusions, confirmed in his own life, may be summed up in a few words :

First, these ancient oriental creeds and forms, venerable without doubt and deserving of an impartial and thoughtful examination, pertain more to critical science than to religion proper. We have passed beyond them. Practically speaking, they distil, almost without exception, a metaphysical drug which, if one is not cautious, may be deleterious to the soul. The trouble lies in idealistic pantheism, monism, complete identification of the individual with the absolute,—“That art thou” interpreted by certain Upanishads as “I am God.” As has been remarked by a Hindu sage,—Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore, the father of the poet,—if the worshipper and the worshipped are identical, if God and man are one and the same substance, whom and what can we worship and pray to? Religion is canceled.

Second, I turn to men and women of good faith, believing themselves genuine Christians yet following the teaching of Vedanta and adhering to the postulate,—much in vogue to-day,—that all religions are of equal value; and I feel it my duty to warn them that even lavish homage paid to Christ simply as an avatar among the others,—Buddha, Krishna, Zoroaster, Mohammed,—ought not to make them forget that this is the first step on the road to dechristianization. If they wish to remain true Christians they must believe that Christ is, as Browning said, “the Son of God and the very God.” Outside this creed we revert to chaos, in religion and in society as well. Roosevelt stated an impregnable fact when declaring that the man who loves all women as much as his wife, loves in reality neither his wife nor the other women. Similarly, he who dabbles in all religions is soon unable to profit by any.

To Vivekananda I owe much in human enlightenment. In his company for months I enjoyed the unique privilege of having met in one

man something of Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, and perhaps of Buddha himself. To him I am indebted, by contrast, for a deeper adoration of the Christian truth. In the efforts we made together to tear away, by the mere force of mind, the unliftable veil, I became convinced of the futility and insufficiency of human reason confronting the absolute. Despair is at the end of Stoicism, however heroic it may be. The early teaching which my mother whispered to me stood out as holding more practical wisdom, in its impulses of simple faith and homely love, than all the dicta of the greatest sages.

These final remarks of M. Bois deserve some notice. His first point is that the Westerners have passed beyond "these" oriental creeds and forms. It will not be wrong to suppose that thereby he implies that Christianity is superior to oriental religions. No reasons are given in support of this easy conclusion. The excellence of a creed is judged by its underlying philosophy and its influence on life. Can M. Bois seriously deny that oriental philosophies are at least equal to Christian theology and orientals as spiritual as the occidentals?

His second point is that oriental creeds are deleterious to the soul. We cannot judge it until we know what M. Bois means by soul. These are souls which are steeped in sensuality, glory in earthly things and are afraid of the higher truths of the Spirit. To such, we admit, oriental creeds are dangerous,—not "these" oriental creeds only, but also the other creed of the oriental Jesus who, if we have understood the New Testament aright, was not less violently against the desires of the flesh. It appears however that M. Bois did not always think of oriental creeds in this amiable light. For in the Chapter VIII of his *Visions de l'Inde*, which he has named *L'Exstase*, he thus speaks of Swami Vivekananda and India: "He incarnated for me—with his genius and his perilous frenzy—that India which I cherish as the Fatherland of my dreams—the Eden where lives the Ideal." Even in the forepart of the present essay he is gracious enough to remark:

"May it not be said that the East was predestined to stimulate the West, which was dozing in well-being, led into selfishness and materialism by the lust of lucre and conquest? . . . While we endeavour to prevail in Asia, she has something to say in protest,—something we might profit by, did we but know how to hear it in a calm and critical spirit, disentangling the useful from the fanciful in this gigantic mass of learning. If Asiatic myths and metaphysics are sometimes for us merely historic documents, their marvelous explorations of the soul, their soaring scientific conjectures, are an inspiration for our earth-bound psychology and hesitant hypotheses."

("We have passed beyond them" indeed!)

It seems to us that these statements rather contradict his first conclusion. But we may be mistaken.

Be that as it may, one reason that he vouchsafes for considering oriental creeds dangerous is that monism—the doctrine of the identity of the individual with the universal—makes worship impossible. We may well retort, how is worship possible without assuming the identity of the worshipper with the object of worship? Can two *seperate* units be ever united in prayer or love? In fact in India even dualistic worship assumes the fundamental identity of the worshipper and the worshipped. M. Bois can profitably consult on this point Arthur Avalon's books on Tantra. We may inform him that in spite of Devendranath Tagore and others of his opinion, monistic *sadhana* has prevailed in India for millenniums, from the ancient days of the Vedas down to the present day, and with astonishing success. Monists are not deluded fools. The difficulty of M. Bois and other such critics arises out of their ignorance of and prejudice against the meaning and truths of monism. But supposing monism makes worship impossible, it does not follow that *all* oriental creeds are deleterious to the soul. Perhaps M. Bois does not know that monism is but one of the many creeds prevalent in India and that others are either dualistic or quasi-monistic, followed by 99 p.c. of Indians. His conclusion smacks more of the missionary dogmatism than of the calm, dispassionate and truth-loving attitude of a philosopher which he is reputed to be.

His second conclusion is against the doctrine of the harmony of religions. He is quite right in saying that he who dabbles in all religions is soon unable to profit by any. Only he mistakes *dabbling* in all religions to be harmony of religions. The realisation of the harmony of religions has two stages. In the first or the lower stage, the aspirant holds to one particular aspect of God as his Ideal, giving it his best devotions, *and* also respects other Ideals as being equally true as his own. As Sri Ramakrishna illustrated it, the wife loves and serves all the friends and relations of her husband, but, for him she reserves the unique love and service of her heart. This special love as applied to religion is called *Ista-nisthā*, special devotion for the chosen Ideal. Without *Ista-nisthā*, harmony of religions cannot be understood. We are not asked to dabble in all creeds. We

follow one creed specially, but honour other creeds as being equally valuable to others. It may be true that he who loves all women as much as his wife in reality loves neither. But because one loves one's wife, cannot one honour the conjugal love of others and regard it to be as precious as one's own?

We do not see therefore why it should be the first step on the road to dechristianization. We may believe that Christ is the son of God and the very God, and the same time believe that Krishna and Rama also are sons of God and the very God. There is no psychological difficulty in believing that God may have many different manifestations. If God can have three aspects, as some Christians believe, why cannot He have more than three aspects? If one can accommodate three, one can also accommodate more than three. Cannot one's wife be recognised to be the same in different dresses? When therefore we have purged our mind of fanaticism, we have reached the first stage of the harmony of religions, for then we feel that all religions are but different *aspects* of the same Divine Truth, suiting different tastes and temperaments.

Perhaps in a sense it may be dechristianization. For it will eventually destroy the present-day dogmatic, narrow and jealous Christianity. But it will not mean chaos in religion and society. It will reveal a nobler conception of life and religion, more scientific, more convincing and philosophical and more honourable.

In the second or the higher stage, one feels equal love for all religious ideals. One arrives at the centre of Truth and glories in all its aspects and expressions. This is the final goal. The lower development culminates in the higher. This ultimate Ideal is not an unsubstantial homogeneity, as is proved by the life of Sri Ramakrishna. He realised and embodied the highest ideals of all creeds; than him there was not a truer Hindu, a truer Muhammedan or a truer Christian. Bigoted Christianity may not now like this idea of religious harmony. But the progress of knowledge will make its acceptance inevitable. Christianity must either go down or accept its position as only one of many equally valid paths to the realisation of Truth. There is no other alternative.

M. Bois makes a premature statement when he observes in his final paragraph that "Despair is at the end of Stoicism, however heroic it may be." He says: "In the efforts we made

together to tear away, by the mere force of mind, the unliftable veil, I became convinced of the futility and insufficiency of human reason confronting the absolute." It is a pity M. Bois ended with despair. As for Swami Vivekananda, we *know* that he succeeded in lifting the veil long long before M. Bois met him, and that that glorious consummation was not reached through arm-chair philosophising, but through austere discipline, unflagging perseverance and most strenuous efforts. Strange that whereas even a whole life's earnest endeavour is not considered adequate to discover a few truths of external nature, it is thought that a few months' pious philosophising is enough to realise the highest and the inmost truths! M. Bois appears to have read Swami Vivekananda's *Raja Yoga*. In that certain conditions are mentioned as preliminary to the realisation of Truth. One is curious to know if M. Bois fulfilled them before he jumped into his pessimistic conclusion.

M. Bois says that he is indebted to Swami Vivekananda *by contrast* for a deeper adoration of the Christian faith. But once he was good enough to look upon him as the incarnation of his Ideal. For ourselves we do not see any real difference between Swami Vivekananda's "Stoicism" and the "Stoicism" of Jesus Christ. If "the practical wisdom" with its "simple faith and homely love" is something very different from Swami Vivekananda's "Stoicism," we are inclined to believe it has very little to do with the true teachings of Jesus, though in his name it may pass. Of course our judgment ripens with age and experience. But age also often weakens the vision and vigour of the soul, and failing to realise the Ideal, we often hoodwink ourselves by idealising the real.

THE ESSENCE OF VEDANTA

(Continued from page 180)

[VEDANTASARA]

एत्रम्भूतः प्रमाताधिकारी—“शान्तो दान्त” (बृ: उ: ४।४।२३)
इत्यादि श्रुतेः । उक्तं च—

“ प्रशान्तचित्ताय जितेन्द्रियाय च
प्रहीणदोषाय यथोक्तकारिणे ।
गुणान्वितायानुगताय सर्वदा
प्रदेयमेतत्सर्वतं मुमुक्षवे ॥ ” इति

(उपदेशसहस्री ३२४, १६।७२) । २६

26. Such¹ an aspirant is a qualified student, as is said in the Sruti passages, “Quiet,² subdued” (Bri. Upa. 4. 4. 23), etc. It is further said, “This is always to be taught to one who is of tranquil mind, who has subjugated his senses, who is free from fault,³ obedient,⁴ endowed⁵ with virtues, always submissive,⁶ and who is eager for liberation. (Upadesha-Sahasri⁷ 324, 16. 72)

[1 Such—Endowed with qualifications mentioned above such as *Shama*, *Dama*, etc. One commentator opines that a monk alone is qualified to receive the highest knowledge, as the householder is pre-occupied with various ritualistic functions and also because he is not entitled to listen to the highest conclusions of the Vedas. But this is rather an extreme view. The real spirit of the scripture is that complete renunciation alone is the *sine qua non* of the realisation of Truth. Sankara also in his commentary on the Brihadâraryaka Upanishad says that though utmost stress must be given on Sannyasa as the prerequisite of the highest realisation, the latter must not be made dependent upon the former.

2 Quiet etc.—The Sruti is cited as a scriptural evidence of Sama etc. being considered as prerequisites of Knowledge. The complete passage is, “तस्मादेवंविच्छान्तो दान्त उपरतस्तितिक्षुः समाहितो भूत्वात्मन्येवात्मानं पश्यति” —“He, therefore, that knows It, after having become quiet, subdued, satisfied, patient and collected, sees self in Self.” From this passage have been taken Sama, Dama, Uparati, Titikshâ and Samâdhana of the text. The above quotation of the Bri. Upa. is according to the Kânwa recension. The Mâdhyaṅdina recension substitutes ‘श्रद्धावित्तो भूत्वा’ in place of समाधान। Therefore the author of the Vedântasâra has combined the two recensions and enumerated the six qualifications mentioned as शम, दम etc.

The following passages from the Smriti and the Sruti may be cited as additional evidences.

योगारूढस्य तस्यैव शमः कारणमुच्यते । (गीता ६।३)

“For the same Yogi, when he is enthroned in Yoga, serenity is said to be the means.” (Gita 6. 3)

यदा संहरते चायं कूर्मोऽङ्गानीव सर्वशः ।
इन्द्रियाणीन्द्रियाभ्यस्तस्य प्रज्ञा प्रतिष्ठिता ॥ (गीता २।५८)

“When, again, as a tortoise draws in on all sides its limbs, he withdraws his senses from the sense-objects, then his wisdom becomes steady.” (Gita 2. 58)

सर्वधर्मान्परित्यज्य मामेकं शरणं ब्रज । (गीता १८।६६)

“Abandoning all duties, come unto Me for shelter.” (Gita 18. 66)

मात्रास्पर्शास्तु कौन्तेय शीतोष्णसुखदुःखदा ।
आगमापायिनोऽनित्यास्तांस्तितिक्षस्व भारत ॥ (गीता २।१४)

“Ideas of heat and cold, of pain and pleasure, are born, O son of Kunti, only of the contact of senses with their objects. They come and go and are impermanent. Bear them patiently, O descendant of Bharata.” (Gita 2. 14)

श्रद्धावाँल्लभते ज्ञानं तत्परः संयतेन्द्रियः । (गीता ४।३६)

“The man with Sraddhâ, faith, obtains wisdom and he also who has mastery over his senses.” (Gita 4. 39)

मुमुक्षुर्वैशर्यामहं प्रपद्ये । (श्वेतः उः ६।१८)

“Seeking for freedom I go for refuge.” (Sveta. Up. 6. 18).

As regards the qualifications of the aspirant, the following beautiful passage from the *Sântiparva* of the *Mahâbhârata* may be cited :

श्रद्धान्वितायाथ गुणान्विताय परापवादाद्विरताय नित्यं ।
विशुद्धयोगाय बुधाय नित्यं क्रियावते च क्षमिणा हिताय ॥
विविक्तश्रीलाय विधिप्रियाय विवादहीनाय बहुश्रुताय ।
विजानते चैव न चाहितक्षमे दमे च शक्ताय शमे च देयम् ॥...

* * * *

जितेन्द्रियायैतदसंशयं ते भवेत्प्रदेयं परमं नरेन्द्र ॥

3 *Faults*—passions, etc

4 *Obedient*—or the word in the text may mean one who relinquishing the *Kâmya* and the forbidden works performs only the daily obligatory duties and those also for the satisfaction of the Lord.

5 *Endowed with etc.*—Such virtues as discrimination, renunciation, forbearance, etc.

6 *Submissive*—Always devoted to the service of the Guru which is one of the greatest requisites for the attainment of Knowledge.

7 *Upadesha-Sahasri*—A treatise ascribed to Sankara.]

विषयो जीवब्रह्मैक्यं शुद्धचैतन्यं प्रमेयं तत्रैव वेदान्तानां
तात्पर्यात् । २७

27. The subject¹ is the unity² of the individual self and

Brahman, which is of the nature of Pure Intelligence³ and is to be proved. For such⁴ is the purport of the Vedantic books.

[1 *Subject*—After dealing with the first *Anubandha*, viz. the qualifications of the aspirant, the text proceeds with the other three *Anubandhas*.

2 *Unity etc.*—The Unity of Jiva and Brahman is the essential doctrine of the Advaita Vedanta.

3 *Pure Intelligence*—The state of homogeneity wherein all attributes are transcended. The point to be proved, which is also the object of the Vedânta, is the unity and sameness of Brahman and Jiva by the elimination of their respective attributes, such as, omniscience, limited knowledge etc., superimposed by ignorance. The result will be a state of Pure Intelligence wherein all ideas of separation and variety are effaced. The word "Pure Intelligence" is mentioned in the text in order to refute the contention of the opponent that the Jiva and Brahman which are essentially different in nature may yet remain in a state of unity like milk and water.

4 *Such etc.*—Kapila, Kanâda and other philosophers conclude that the object of Vedânta is to prove the existence of Pradhâna etc. But when considered in its entirety it becomes clear that the object of Vedânta is to establish Brahman. Comp. "सर्वे वेदा यत्पदमामनन्ति" (कठः उः १।२।१५)—"That Word which all the Vedas declare." "वेदंश्च सर्वैरहमेव वेद्यः"—(गीता १५।१५)—"I am verily that which is to be known in all the Vedas."]

(To be continued)

OPTIMISM IN INDIAN THOUGHT

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It is always convenient and necessary for logical consistency to define our terms at the outset before we deal with the subject. The word Optimism has various shades of meaning. As set forth by Leibnitz it is a doctrine which assumes that the actual world is the best of all possible worlds. It is a view that good must ultimately prevail over evil in the universe. In other words it is an attitude of mind that always tries to take a bright view of everything and is never filled with despair even in the midst of apparent failure. An optimist is full of hope and good cheer and has the fullest confidence in his own self and in the final victory of right and justice. Hope, and not fear, therefore, is his watchword.

By Indian Thought is meant the religious and philosophical speculations of the ancient Vedic religion with its six systems of philosophy, the Buddhist and the Jaina systems of thought and religious disciplines.

To a synthetic mind which discerns unity in diversity and pays more attention to the fundamental principles rather than to the superficial differences, these three main currents of thought as expounded by the highly evolved and spiritually illuminated beings have a common goal and agree to no small extent in their outlook on life and its problems. The idea of the reality of the soul, of the development of the individual soul through a chain of earth-lives, of the consummation of this process of development in the union of the individual with the universal soul and its consequent admission into a life of unimaginable peace and bliss, which found expression in the Upanishads, are more or less shared by the religions of Indian origin.

Since the Providential contact of India and England the Western savants have taken some interest in the study of Eastern thought and culture. One is pained to find that in spite of their scholarship some of them have completely misunderstood the spirit of Indian Thought. Every race has its own genius, and its ideals of life cannot be understood by an alien people unless they are studied with an open and unbiased mind. Of the many charges levelled against Indian Thought, one is that of Pessimism. It is alleged that Indian philosophy and religion hold no bright prospects before their adherents and that their outlook on life is extremely dark and gloomy. They are not inspired by their faith to lead a life of usefulness and unselfish endeavour. Nothing could be farther from the truth than this. It is a truism that the child cannot understand and sympathise with the young man, nor can the young man understand the sobering cares and anxieties of the middle-aged. The whole course of nature ordains that the older who know more will understand the younger who know less. The Western people, who are comparatively young in civilization and culture, and are still confined to the Path of Pursuit (the Pravritti-marga) of which we shall speak presently, know little of and care less for the other half of life, the Nivritti-marga, without the knowledge of which the fundamental facts of the Universe, the foundations of all existence, remain unknown.

I. The ancient Lawgiver, Manu, has laid down a code of life which is based on a complete view of world-process. He takes into consideration the action and reaction as also the interdependence of Self and Not-Self, variously called Atma and Anatma, Purusha and Prakriti, Spirit and Matter. It is just this interplay between the two which appears as the rhythmic swing spoken of under many names. The world-process is compared to a circle. One half of the circle is the arc of the descent of Spirit into Matter, and the other half is the arc of its re-ascent out of that Matter. We may speak of Spirit becoming involved in Matter, in sheaths, and then becoming evolved out of it. The first half of this process is called the Path of Pursuit (Pravritti) and the other half is called the Path of Return (Nivritti).

The Philosophical Schools (Darshanas) speak of these Paths (Margas) also. According to Manu the object of the Path of Pursuit is threefold, Duty, Profit, Pleasure (Dharma, Artha, Kama). In the Second Chapter, 224th verse, he says, "Some say that the performance of duty and the gathering of riches are 'the good'; some say wealth and sense-enjoyment; some duty only. But the well-established truth is that the three together make the end of the life of Pursuit." It might indeed be said that sense-pleasure (Kama) alone is the *summum bonum* for the arc of descent. The word means the enjoyment of the senses and the wish for those enjoyments. All our mind, all our body, instinctively runs in the direction of sense-objects.

The object of the second half is stated by Manu to be Liberation (Moksha). In Ch. VI, verse 35, he says, "Having paid off the three debts (deva, pitri and rishirina) the human being should direct the mind to Liberation. Not without discharging them in full may he desire Moksha. If he does so aspire upwards before due time, he will fall the deeper into Matter." It simply means this, that only after pursuit is renunciation possible.

On the second and final path we see that Devotion (Bhakti) in the sense of yearning after the final good leads to Power (Shakti), and that in return to Liberation (Mukti).*

II. The second fundamental principle that we have to bear in mind in understanding the philosophy of life as enunciated by the ancient thinkers and as throwing a flood of light on the subject in hand, is the existence of an immutable and changeless law of Cause and Effect popularly called Karma. No human life is isolated. It is the child of all the lives before it, of the total aggregate of the lives that make up the continuing existence of the individual. There is no such thing as chance or as accident. Every event is linked to a preceding cause, to a following effect. All thoughts, deeds, circumstances, are causally related to the past and will causally influence the future.

This inviolable Law does by no means paralyse human will, nor does it deprive a man of his freedom of choice. This good Law works with an unerring precision on all the planes of our being, mental, moral and spiritual. Every living being is subject to it. In the Devi Bhagavata, IV, II, 8, it is said that "All, Brahma and the rest, are under its sovereign rule." So far as the Prarabdha or the ripe Karma is concerned a man is helpless, as he cannot possibly alter it. But he can certainly modify his Sanchita-Karma, that which is accumulated, a part of which is seen in the tendencies. In regard to the Kriyamana, that which is in course of making, he is absolutely free and can shape it in any form he chooses. Very great importance is, therefore, attached to Purushakara, Self-effort.

* The Science of Social Organisation by Bhagavan Das, Lecture I.

Bhishma's precious words are still ringing in our ears: "Exertion is greater than Destiny."

It is this Law that makes it possible, nay certain, for us to attain anything we earnestly desire. Is this not a sufficient reason for hope and joy? Does this not stimulate us to strenuous and persistent activity? Can there be any greater surety and guarantee of our success in any department of life?

III. In the light of this law it is easy to see how a man on the path of pursuit or on the path of return is capable of achieving anything he desires. Those who are treading the path of pursuit and are in search for the pleasures of the senses, wealth, health, name and fame, etc., if they work in right earnest in the pursuit of their object in view, they are sure to attain it in course of time.

It is now pertinent to ask whether this is a message of hope or of despair. Does this not reveal the optimistic aspect of Indian Thought, because the Hindus, the Buddhists, and the Jainas alike believe in the existence of the Law of Karma?

IV. One of the most outstanding features of Indian Thought as stated by Dr. Miller is the immanence of God and the solidarity of man. Man is not a mere particle of dust visible to-day and gone to-morrow. Contrary to the Christian doctrine, the Vedic conception of man does not find any trace of what is called the original sin in his nature. As against this view man is believed to be an *Amsa*, an essential part of God Himself. All schools of Indian Philosophy insist upon the Divine nature of man. In the words of the Upanishads, the highest product of the human mind, man is the form of being in whom the Self and the Not-Self are balanced. A *Jivatma* is *Ishvara* with name and form. We read in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, "That Immortal is hidden by existence." Again in the same Upanishad (I, vi, 3) it is said that "Life is verily the Immortal. Name and form—mere existence, by these the life is concealed."

Thus all the Upanishads are unanimous in proclaiming that *Jivatma* in essence shares the Divine characteristics, namely, that it is *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda*, self-existent, source of all knowledge and blissful in its nature. Therefore, by long and steady process of evolution man progresses onward and upward endlessly until he realises his oneness with the Supreme Self. By virtue of his being Divine in essence he is capable of achieving any mental or moral height he himself chooses.

We are parts of *Ishvara* limited by name and form, and the part has not at first the possibilities, or rather the actualities, of the whole. In order that we who are parts may become the whole, we enter into a temporary limitation, that therein we may conquer, that therein we may be free. Hence this material bondage. In our limited condition, we may wonder why we came hither. But none compelled us to come into this

universe. We came of our own free will, with Ishvara who willed to manifest. And because He willed to manifest we willed also. For we are part of Him. As a part we must win our freedom, until in the grossest world of matter we shall be as omnipotent, as wise, as we are in those supernal regions of our birth, where we know our own divinity and our non-separation from Ishvara.

Srijut Bhagavan Das, in his monumental book, *The Science of Peace*, an exposition of Adhyatma-vidya, has beautifully summed up the height to which a man can climb. He says, "The Jiva that, having reached the end of the Pravritti arc of its particular cycle, thus realises the utter equality, the utter sameness and identity of all Jivas in the Supreme Self, amidst the utter diversity of the Not-Self, cries out at the overpowering wonder of it. 'The beholder seeth it as a marvel, the narrator speaketh it as a marvel, and yet after the seeing, speaking and hearing of it, none knoweth the complete detail of it.' (Bhagavad Gita ii, 29). And he also cries out at the same time, 'Where is there despondency, where sorrow, unto him who seeth the oneness?' (Isha Upanishad). He sees that all Jivas rise and fall, lower and higher, endlessly, in pseudo-infinite time and space and motion. He sees that the Jiva that is a crawling worm to-day will be the Ishvara of a great system to-morrow; and that the Jiva that is the Ishvara of a system to-day will descend into deeper densities of matter in a greater system to-morrow, to rise to the still larger Ishvaraship of a vaster system in still another Kalpa. (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, I, IV, 10)."

Further the same author continues and says, "Knowing all this, he knoweth, he cogniseth, Brahman; and loving all selves as himself, desiring their welfare as his own, and acting for their happiness as he laboureth for his own, he realiseth and is Brahman. Such an one is truly Mukta, free, delivered from all bonds; he knows and is the absolute, the self absolved from all the limitations of the Not-Self, the self wherein is absolution from all doubt and error, all wants and pains, all fevered restlessness and anxious seeking. To him belongs the everlasting peace!" Such a high conception of the progress of man is of the very essence of all optimistic systems of Indian Thought. The less bound man feels in his onward march by the trammels of human limitations, the higher do his hopes and aspirations rise. So much so that nothing can ultimately arrest or baffle his pursuit, and he may, if he himself chooses to do so, rise to the realisation of the highest in himself.

V. If it were possible to take a general survey of all mankind and their hearts we shall not have to wait long before we discover that every man, high or low, learned or ignorant, boy or adult, savage or sage, without an exception, is in search of some kind of happiness or pleasure in his own way. But the pleasure or happiness that one seeks varies not only in kind but also in value, according to his own capacity or his

place in evolution. In the words of Sri Krishna, the delights that are contact-born, are verily wombs of pain; they have beginning and end, not in them may rejoice the wise. The material enjoyment of life and the outer physical world have no permanent value. On the contrary they are fleeting and transitory.

The thoughtful people do not take long to realise that every material object is subject to change, and is, therefore, unreal, as compared to the real aspect of our existence.

It is worth our while to seriously reflect and enquire from our own selves in our calmer moments whether this earth-life is really capable of satisfying us. Cannot we see for ourselves that in the last resort it is hollow and unreal? Do the prizes for which we strive content us when we have won them? Everything that the earth can give us—health, wealth, pleasure, power, success, fame—proves to be either transient or illusory.

Once Gautama, the Buddha, addressing the Bhikkhus remarked, "This, O monks, is the sacred truth of suffering. Birth is suffering, old age is suffering, death is suffering, to be united with the unloved is suffering, to be separated from the loved one is suffering, not to obtain what one desires is suffering, in short the fivefold clinging to the earthly is suffering." This is the fourfold truth on which hinges Buddha's whole scheme of life. Let us try to set it forth in other and fewer words: (1) Life on earth is full of suffering. (2) Suffering is generated by desire. (3) The extinction of desire involves the extinction of suffering. (4) The extinction of desire (and therefore of suffering) is the outcome of a righteous life.*

We should not forget in this connection that it is the desire for what does not belong to "self", the real self, that generates suffering; and the reason why such desire generates suffering is that what does not belong to the real self is impermanent, changeable, perishable, and that impermanence in the object of desire must needs cause disappointment, regret, disillusionment, and other forms of suffering to him who desires. The impermanence of everything earthly seems to have impressed itself deeply on Indian Thought. People live and are content to live, from year to year, and even from day to day; and they regard as permanent things that will last unchanged for a few generations or even for a few years. But the far-sighted Indian sages, looking backward and forward through vast stretches of time, saw that sooner or later everything outward, however secure of life it might seem to be, must change and fade and pass away. To the Brahmanic thinkers the impermanence of things was a proof of their unreality.*

Buddha could say to his followers, "What you deem happiness is unworthy of the name. There are better things than these in store for

you—pure, perfect and real happiness. These will be given to you freely, if you will but win them for yourself.” He who could say this (or the equivalent of this) had reached the highest conceivable level of optimism. Thus what Buddha saw at the heart of the Universe was not the darkness of sorrow, suffering and death, but the glory of Nirvana, by which, to quote Mr. Edmond Holmes, he meant “a state of ideal spiritual perfection, in which the soul, having completely detached itself by the force of its own natural expansion from what is individual, impermanent and phenomenal, embraces and becomes one with the Universal, the Eternal, and the Real.” In other words “the essence of Nirvana is the finding of the ideal itself, in and through the attainment to oneness, living conscious oneness, with the all and the Divine.” (*Creed of Buddha*, p. 199). Is this a message of pessimism, or of hope and joy of the life eternal that is awaiting us? I leave it to you to decide for yourself.

VI. The knowledge of Brahman as Bliss is the only “end to misery.” A remarkable passage in the Taittiriya Upanishad starts from depicting the joy of a man, a youth to whom the whole world is full of wealth and who is firm and strong and well-disciplined, then this joy of man is multiplied a hundredfold and so on successively through a long list of greater and greater joys in geometrical progression, and at last reaches Brahman, who “consists of Bliss,” “from whom all words return together with the mind, without having comprehended Him.” (ii, 8th and 9th Anuvaka). It is the Self who possesses all the powers; whom we should truly desire to know.

The fact that everything external is a mere appearance and the reality lies only in spirit is corroborated by F. H. Bradley in these words, “Outside of spirit there is not, and there cannot be, any reality, and the more that anything is spiritual so much the more it is veritably real.” The essential message of Hegel was also to the same effect. “The true life,” says Fichte, “lives in the Eternal, it is a whole in every instant, the brightest life which is possible at all. The phantom life lives in the changing. The phantom life, therefore, becomes an incessant dying. It lives in dying.”

The appeal to the careful consideration of the Eternal Value by Hugo Munsterberg, a German thinker, and to the Ultimate Value by J. S. Mackenzie in the books bearing the same titles, must be, I dare say, familiar to you. Have these Western thinkers while drawing our attention to ultimate and abiding state of happiness, through self-realisation, been preaching the gospel of gloom and darkness, or bliss and joy unspeakable? Does their teaching not coincide with Indian Thought on this subject?

This truth that Brahman is all is the magna charta of intellectual freedom. Let a man think, let a man speak ; never mind if he makes errors ; further knowledge will lead him on the right path. He cannot

Sri Ramkrishna Veda-Vidyalaya

We have received a gratifying report of the Sri Ramkrishna Veda-Vidyalaya from the Gadadhar Ashram, Bhawanipur, Calcutta, one of the centres of the Ramkrishna Order. The Vidyalaya was started in the February of the last year with the object of teaching the Vedas and other Hindu scriptures. It received slight monetary help from some interested gentlemen and engaged an eminent scholar of Nyâya in September. In December last, in order to secure a better foundation of the school, it was decided that a committee consisting of some monks of the Order and a few representatives of the public should be formed with Prof. Surendranath Das Gupta, author of *Indian Philosophy*, as president. Accordingly, the proposed committee held its first meeting on the 9th January last, presided over by Prof. Das Gupta and decided that at present greater attention should be paid to the study of the Vedânta and other philosophies and the Bhagavatam and other Puranas, and that the study of the Samhita portions of the Vedas would be undertaken when and if earnest students came forward. The aim of the school is not only to teach the Vedic scriptures and philosophies to students, but also to spread their teachings among the general public.

It was the earnest desire of Swami Vivekananda that our ancient scriptures, especially the Vedic literature, should be made widely known among the Hindus, and in particular, the Bengalees. The Veda-Vidyalaya is an earnest effort towards the realisation of that noble desire. We do hope that the public will render their earnest help to this infant institution.

The R. K. Mission Students' Home, Madras

The report of Sri Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Madras, for the year 1926 was issued as usual on the 1st of January. The number of boarders at the end of the year was 122, of whom 25 were college students, 79 studied in the Residential High School and 20 in the Industrial Schools. The internal management was mostly in the hands of the boys, and they did their work to a perfection which evoked enthusiastic praises from all visitors. Religious classes were regularly held and due attention was paid to the physical exercise of the boys.

The Residential High School has been eminently successful; 16 out of 17 boys sent up for public examination were placed in the eligible list. To quote the words of the Dist. Educational Officer, Madras, "it is doubtful whether there is another school in Madras where boys have such splendid opportunities to study."

The mechanical engineering workshop was extended during the year at a cost of Rs. 4,326.

As regards finance, the total receipts towards recurring expenses were Rs. 45,607-13-1 and total disbursements Rs. 45,294-11. Rs. 37,216-13-6 were added during the year to the Permanent Endowment Fund.

The Home appeals to the public for generous help in developing its Industrial Section and strengthening the Permanent Endowment Fund. Contributions may be sent to Secy., Sri Ramakrishna Mission Students' Home, Mylapore, Madras.

wander outside the self, for the self is everywhere. He cannot lose the self, for the self is within him. Let the intellect soar as it will, upwards and upwards as far as its wings can beat; still far beyond his power, far across its piercing, North, South, East and West, and Zenith and Nadir, Brahman stretches everywhere, the illimitable self. Intellect cannot go outside the self, of which it is a manifestation. It cannot, therefore, shake the eternal certainty of self-existence.* Hinduism places no fetters on the intellect; man may think as long as he can. There is no penalty on thought; there is no blasphemy in investigation. There is nothing too sacred to be challenged. Brahman is fearless. We are Brahman, how then should we fear?

That is why no one has ever been condemned for and deprived of the joy and privilege of intellectual liberty which is every man's birth-right by any school of Indian Thought. Does this sound attitude of mind point to pessimism?

Lastly let us bear in mind that there is no system of Philosophical or Religious Thought in the world which so distinctly and clearly lays down as its object the putting an end to pain by the reaching of Brahman who is Bliss as the Indian Thought does. Says Svetásvatara Upanishad: "Until man is able to roll up the ether as leather, there will be no end to misery except through the knowing of God."

So again Sri Krishna teaches: "That should be known by the name of Yoga, this disconnection from the union with pain." And again, "Supreme Joy is for this Yogi whose mind is peaceful, whose passion nature is calmed, who is sinless and of the nature of the Eternal." In the sublime words of one of the Upanishads, "where is then grief, where delusion, for him who hath seen the oneness?"†

NEWS AND REPORTS

Swami Madhavananda Sails for U. S. A.

Our readers are aware of the passing away of Swami Prakashananda who was in charge of the San Francisco Vedanta Centre. Since that melancholy event the members of the Vedanta Society have been asking for another sannyasin of the Order from India to occupy his place. Swami Madhavananda, the President of the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama has accordingly been put in charge of the Vedanta work at San Francisco. As President of the Advaita Ashrama for the last eight years he has shown great ability, and during this period the institution showed remarkable progress in all departments. We wish him similar success in his new sphere of activity and hope his presence will give a fresh impetus to the Vedanta work in California. Swami Vireswarananda, one of his colleagues has succeeded him as the President of the Mayavati Advaita Ashrama.

* Kamala Lectures by Dr. Annie Besant, pp. 31.

† Read at the Benares session of the Indian Philosophical Congress.